San Pedro's

One Punk's Guide to Bizarro Fiction Wayne Kramer | DFMK | Hard Girls Remembering Tommy Ramone





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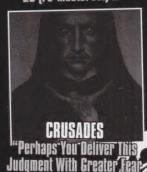
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WHO WE ARE...

Razorcake exists because of you. Whether you contributed any content that was printed in this issue, placed an ad, or are a reader: without your involvement, this magazine would not exist. We are a community that defies geographical boundaries or easy answers. Much of what you will find here is open to interpretation, and that's how we like it.

In mainstream culture the bottom line is profit. In DIY punk the bottom line is a personal decision. We operate in an economy of favors amongst ethical, life-long enthusiasts. And we're fucking serious about it. Profitless and proud.

There's nothing more laughable than the general public's perception of punk. Endlessly misrepresented and misunderstood. Exploited and patronized. Let the squares worry about "fitting in." We know who we are.

Within these pages you'll find unwavering beliefs rooted in a culture that values growth and exploration over tired predictability.

There is a rumbling dissonance reverberating within the inner walls of our collective skull. Thank you for contributing to it.

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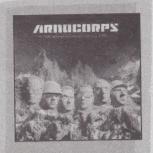
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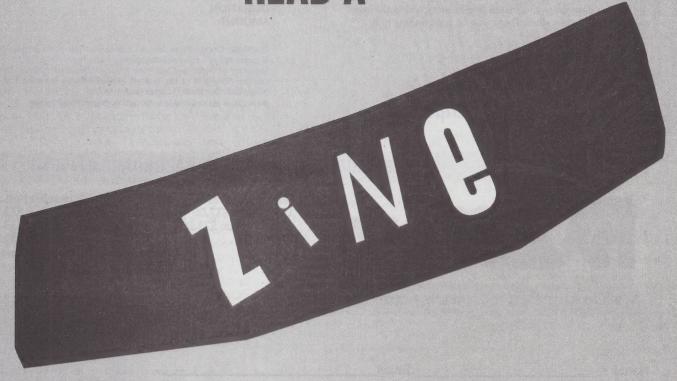
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Sequels, Echoes, and Erasure

At Razorcake's core, we're all outsiders. Here's the checklist to participate with Razorcake:

□ I am not an asshole.

 \Box I do what I say I'm going to do and it is my best effort—not a "good enough for punk" effort.

□ What I'm submitting applies to DIY punk. (Check the RC mission statement on razorcake.org if you want our operating definition.)

In case it's not obvious: As Razorcake editor, I'm interested in the quality of your writing, your art, and your skills as an interviewer. There is no discrimination based on the color of your skin, your gender, or your orientation. I don't care when or where you were born or currently live; what schooling you do or do not have; how much money you do or do not have; what you look like; how much you weigh or what you eat; or who your friends are or aren't. You will not be asked to exchange sensitive data with us that we will resell. The rule is simple: well-written perspectives from everyone in the DIY punk community. Bring it. Bang!

Here's a case study. Genesis said "hi" to me at the last L.A. Zine Fest. She was interested in helping out. Razorcake's been in the same neighborhood for over fourteen years. When we were operating out of a tiny apartment, Genesis was a student at the middle school less than two blocks away. Fast forward a decade. Genesis was rolled up on by a cop on her way to RCHQ to volunteer. The smart officer thought she was a sixth-grade truant skipping classes. She showed the dingdong her ID. She'd graduated from college. Genesis has come in for months and has been a big help around HQ, proofreading, web programming, transcribing. She illustrated Kari's column in this issue. She's also just rad and very talented. To me, that's community. That's meritocracy: an open door in a hidden-in-plain-sight organization.

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This issue is dedicated to Tommy Ramone

Cover design by Todd Taylor and Daryl Gussin, photo by Shanty Cheryl

"Violence does not always take visible form, and not all wounds gush blood."

-Haruki Murakami, 1084

Razorcake/ Gorsky, Inc. Board of Directors: Todd Taylor, Sean Carswell, Daryl Gussin, Dan Clarke, Katy Spining, Leo Emil Tober III, and Catherine Casada Hornberger.



Let's not permanent marker smiles on our faces yet. There is discrimination in Razorcake. We're not a phone book. We don't print everything that's sent to us. Well-intentioned submissions have failed, even if they ticked all the righteous boxes. It's no fun to say "No," but I believe in grammar for clarity. I believe that the stories in our pages capture, challenge, and criticize a large, collective, diverse community that's constantly evolving. Submissions must meet enforceable standards. Feelings get hurt. I'm the one who hurts them.

I understand the world is unfair. It's often brutal and graceless. Exploitative. People in ever-powerful positions are turning the screws on the lid. They've won the full-scale land war. We're fucked and

that's okay because, well, it's nothing new.

Here's some more discrimination at Razorcake. This one laps our shores more often. No big corporate anything. Fuck them. I used to think that big corporations wanted us dead. Not anymore. They want to harvest us, re-package us, and then sell, sell, sell. Corporations are great at sequels and echoes and erasure of sources. Their currency is

currency. Nothing more.

We, as a DIY culture, face another slip of the ultra-capitalism noose. Many musicians and artists believe large corporations are the *only* option to support a culture that relies heavily on the music it produces. Look at these musicians' actions. Follow the money. (They did.) They burned bridges and then suffered lawyer-and-manager-and-label amnesia. To date, there has been no significant reinvestment by these musicians and artists in the underground community that helped nurture them. They're called predators. That's why Razorcake discriminates against them.

If that makes me sound self-righteous, then I'm guilty as charged.

-Todd Taylor

THANK YOU: We Bear All thanks to Shanty Cheryl for her cover photo of Baby J; Yeti! It's alive! With a girlfriend! thanks to Brad Beshaw for his illo. in Sean's column; Exploding bee butt, it sorta looks like a Bill Murray in Caddyshack thanks to Jackie Rusted for her illo. in Jim's column; Doomed format? Like carpet on the ceiling of a van? thanks to Steve Thueson for his illo. in Cassie's column; So iconic you'll know them by their silhouettes thanks to Alex Barrett and Kiyoshi Nakazawa for their Ramones illos. in Nørb and Dale's columns; When travesty becomes tribute thanks to Evan Wolff for his illo. in the Chicken's column; You won't be coming in next Friday. You're now in Japan thanks to Genesis Bautista for her illo. in Kari's guest column; Doggone man-dog amniotic sac lit-tra-cha! thanks to MP Johnson, Marcos Siref, and Becky Bennett for the One Punk's Guide to Bizarro Fiction article, illos., and layout; For a band about nothing, they're not at a loss for words thanks to Rene Navarro, Janeth Galaviz, and Victor Sanchez for the DFMK interview, transcription, and photos; Where Eagles Scouts Dare thanks to Sean Arenas, Shelby Fujioka, Yui Fukunaga, and Eric Baskauskas for the Hard Girls interview, photos, and layout; No claws on San Pedro lobsters. Fact. Thanks to Simon Sotelo, Bianca Barragan, and Shanty Cheryl for the Baby J interview and photos; The law won and now is the time for musical redemption thanks to Jeff Proctor, El Diablo, Matt Average, and Matt Dwyer for the Wayne Kramer interview, photos, and layout.

#82's rotation of music, zines, books, and video reviewers—physical items sent postal mail, regarded by human beings: Simon Sotelo, Alanna Why, Sean Arenas, Kurt Morris, Keith Rosson, Sal Lucci, Michael T. Fournier, Bianca Barragan, John Mule, Ashley Ravelo, Chris Terry, Matt Werts, Ryan Nichols, The Lord Kveldulfr, Jimmy Alvarado, MP Johnson, Bryan Static, Garrett Barnwell, Jim Joyce, Kayla Greet, Jackie Rusted, Steve Adamyk, Lisa Weiss, Indiana Laub, Mark Twistworthy, Matt Seward, Matt Average, Camylle Reynolds, Vincent Battilana, Nørb, Chad Williams, Ty Stranglehold, Juan Espinosa, Art Ettinger, Billups Allen, Jeff Proctor, Tim Brooks, Kristen K., Genevieve Armstrong, Kevin Dunn, Ollie Mikse, Aphid Peewit, Rich Cocksedge, and Ryan Leach.

If you're a woman who is knowledgeable about DIY punk, are good with deadlines, and are open to the editorial process, this is an open invitation to drop us a line about doing reviews, interviews, articles, or a webcolumn for Razorcake.

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ORITES // RE

Wearing suits to the Cock Sparrer show

and getting heckled by punx...

Record Originality is overrated.

"When Boobs Become the Enemy" .. 108 Zine

A modern day, dildo-and-nipple-clip Alice in Wonderland... 108 Book

Video It sounds and looks like a nightmare...

The following folks stepped forward to help us do our part over the past two months.

Todd Taylor, Daryl Gussin, Sean Carswell, Skinny Dan, Katy Spining, Candice Tobin, Kari Hamanaka, Matthew Hart, Donna Ramone, Phill Legault, Chris Baxter, Mary Clare Stevens, James Hernandez, Marty Ploy, Rene Navarro, Billy Kostka III, Derek "Nooch!" Whipple, Jason Willis, Janeth Galaviz, Rishbha Bhagi, Adrian Chi, Megan Pants, Alex Martinez, Jimmy Alvarado, Andrew Wagher, Matt Average, Ever Velasquez, Joe Dana, Christina Zamora, Juan Espinosa, Meztli Hernandez, Sean Arenas, Aaron Kovacs, Nicole Macias, Yvonne Drazan, Julia Smut, Jenn Witte, Dave Eck, Chris Pepus, Tim Burkert, Jeff Proctor, Josh Rosa, Toby Tober, Sal Lucci, Johnny Volume, Jennifer Federico, Jennifer Whiteford, Kayla Greet, Lory Gil, Nighthawk, Marcos Siref, Steve Thueson, Evan Wolff, Cassie J. Sneider, Vadim Dozmorov, Ronnie Sullivan, Bill Pinkel, Kurt Morris, Laura Collins, Nation of Amanda, Eric Baskauskas, Vee Liu, Bianca Barragan, Russ Van Cleave, Christine Arguello, Simon Sotelo, Susan Chung, Robert El Diablo, Bryan Static, Mitch Clem, John Miskelly, Jamie L. Rotante, Genesis Bautista, Eric Baskauskas, Andy Garcia, Ian Jones, Andy Higgins, Mike Huguenor, Chris Rager, Camylle Reynolds, Becky Bennett, Adam Perry, Craven Rock, Replay Dave, Adam Ali, Alxis Ratkevich, and Matt Sweeting.

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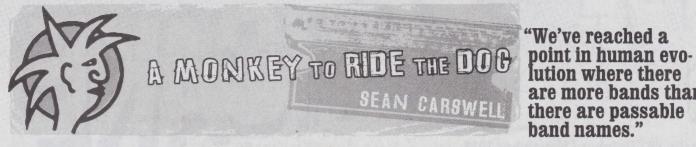
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are more bands than

An Army of Bad Capitalists

I'm at the train station waiting for the northbound Amtrak when an announcement comes over the board that the southbound Amtrak will be delayed for an hour. I ride these trains enough to know what this means. It means that my train is probably ten miles away, sitting at the Oxnard station. It'll sit there for close to a half hour before picking

I'm not in a hurry, so I do what I can in a situation like this. I flip through my mp3 player, find an album that's about a half-hour long, find a spot in the shade, look off at the ocean in the distance, and listen to some music. I've been playing the hell out of the Fear Of Lipstick self-titled album lately. I turn it on and let myself zone out.

The album isn't exactly new. I'm not sure when it came out, other than a few years ago. I never would've picked it up if I hadn't heard the music before hearing the band name or seeing the album cover. I don't know what a fear of lipstick would be or why someone would have that particular phobia. I don't know why anyone would want to name their band Fear Of Lipstick, other than the obvious fact that we've reached a point in human evolution where there are more bands than there are passable band names.

All this is nothing to get uptight about. It's a beautiful day. I have time to spare. The music is upbeat. The melodies are rich. Sometimes the lyrics drift into the depressing or the frustrated. Coupled with that music, though, it comes across as hopeful rather than futile. Fear Of Lipstick has set me up to tap my toes to their problems. I'm all right

with that.

I think about that late train and start tapping my toes to my own frustration. Trains in Southern California drive me a little nuts. When I can ride them, when they're on time, they're the greatest. They take longer than a car, but there's no such thing as a stop-andgo traffic jam. I don't have to drive. I can sit there and listen to music and read and write and relax and still get where I'm going. Train rides are always paired with a walk to and from the station, which is a bonus. When I look at the fat and frustrated Americans in their oversized vehicles, eating and texting and talking on the phone and basically doing anything but paying attention as they swerve down freeways, trains make even more sense. No one is driving a car like they genuinely enjoy driving it. Everyone could use a little more exercise. More trains would be great.

And that's the problem with trains down here: there's not enough of them. I would travel by train several times a week if they ran more reliably and more frequently. But they can't. It all comes down to the problem that leads to me standing at the station, waiting for a train that's ten miles away and in good running condition, but held up at another station for thirty minutes: the fact that there's only one track. All of the trains-freight and passenger—that run between Los Angeles and San Francisco run on one track. If a train is heading north while another one is heading south, one train has to pull over and wait for the other to pass. Since trains run on tracks, there are only a few places where they can actually pull over. And when one train is running behind, all trains are running behind. If there were two tracks, one northbound and one southbound, it would solve a tremendous number of transportation problems.

Talk to someone about building that second track, talk to anyone, maybe even you, and the response is almost always this: trains can't make their money. There's not enough people riding the trains to make them pay for themselves. I understand that. I agree with that. My problem is not with that argument. It's with the underlying assumption behind that argument, the assumption that everything has to be a business, everything has to make money.

This assumption bums me out.

Just as I'm about to get too frustrated, the song "Summertime" comes on. I'm not really sure what the song is about, but it reminds me that it's summertime. I don't have to go to work. I'm listening to good music. My train will come. I can relax.

A few days later, I have to go down to campus. I'm driving my truck this time, listening to the Visitors' Yeti album. I'm thinking about this road I'm on. I start to wonder how expensive it would be if driving cars were strictly a business. How much would roads cost if you had to pay for them every time you drove on them? Especially if a private business owned that road and had to charge you not only for the road, but for their costs in charging you a fee every time you drove on it and for the absurd profits they felt entitled to make. And how expensive would gasoline be if not for the government subsidies given to the oil industry (and, well, the wars the U.S. military fights to take over oil rich regions)? And how much would cars

cost if not for the huge government subsidies and the willingness of the government to bail out, I don't know, say General Motors, when their business flops?

Christ, if you want an endorsement for the success of socialism, look at the car you're driving and the road you're driving on.

I realize that I'm thinking all this stuff instead of listening to the first song of the Visitors album. I start the song over again, turn it up. It's a ridiculous song about partying with Yeti and his girlfriend. I have

When it's done, I think about how glad I am that the Visitors aren't trying to make a business of their band. They would never write a song like this if they wanted to

make money.

The Visitors album keeps me in a good mood all the way to campus. I could be a little grumpy about having to go to work during summer break. I'm not. I know how good I have it. Part of my situation is luck. I stumbled into some fortunate opportunities. Most of my situation isn't luck. Twenty-five years ago, I read a passage by Henry David Thoreau about most men living lives of quiet desperation and about the need to live deliberately. I thought about that. I thought about the quiet desperation of working in the business world, of trying to sell shit to people who don't really want or need it, of the inherent exploitation of the environment or labor or both behind most business enterprises, of becoming so wrapped up in money and possessions that I'm willing to spend fifty, sixty hours a week chasing those chimeras. I didn't want it. I didn't want to work in a cubicle. I didn't want to have to sit at a desk for hours at a time. I didn't want to be indoors all day, breathing more air conditioning than air. I didn't want to wear clothes that had to be dry-cleaned. I didn't want to get to a point where I tied ties enough to do it successfully on the first try. I didn't want to feel like my career did more harm to the environment and other people than good. I didn't want to trade my values for money. In short, I didn't want to work in business.

So, like Thoreau suggested, I lived my life on purpose. I built a career outside of the business world. It's a good life. I spend most of my time helping people. I make a decent living doing it. I have summer breaks.

When people argue that universities should be more like businesses, I'm always a



It's a ridiculous song about partying with Yeti and his girlfriend.

little befuddled. The universities that are like businesses—the for-profit online shit—are mostly a scam. The business world is mostly a series of large-scale failures or one-way traffic moving money to the people who already have way too much. The purpose of business is to capitalize on others for your own profit. If you're not in charge, someone is probably capitalizing on you. This isn't always the case. It's just the basic idea behind the system of capitalism.

I want to be as removed from that as possible.

Later in the week, I'm down at Razorcake HQ: my personal emblem for successful organizations that eschew the business model. Todd gives me a CD and tells me to check it out. He doesn't say anything more. I don't ask any more. When I get home, I play it.

The music sounds a lot like the Copyrights with a different vocalist. The cover and spine give me the words "Hospital Job" and "The

Believer." I'm not sure at first which is the band name and which is the album title. I have to look it up on the internet. The answers are simple. The band is Hospital Job. They have the same songwriter as the Copyrights. Even with the similarities—or perhaps because of them—it's a hell of an album.

When I'm on the It's Alive Records website, it clicks that all my meditations on business ideology have been triggered while listening to It's Alive albums. This is more than a correlation.

I don't know the guy who runs It's Alive. In my mind, I've created a fiction of him in which he petulantly scoffs at the business world and says, "I'm willing to lose a shit ton of money on this album because I think it's great." Nothing he puts out seems marketable to me. I buy almost all of it. I love all the side projects that demand to become main projects like the Manix and the Gateway District. I love the ridiculous covers that dare reviewers and record buyers to move on (have you seen the cat on the French Exit record?). I

love how some of these albums speak to me so deeply. I probably wouldn't have made it through my doctoral program and gotten my sweet-ass professorship if not for that Chinese Telephones song "Keep Smiling," which, at my lowest points, reminded me that no one could help me now.

I don't know that there's a larger point to all this. I do know that so much of our cultural conversation considers the business perspective first, and the more I consider it, the more I look for things that aren't businesses: big societal institutions, like universities and public transportation, and the smaller stuff that makes life worth living: record labels that are someone's passion, bands that have no aspirations beyond the songs, and zines that were designed to never make a profit.

-Sean Carswell





"LOOK AT THAT FREAK WITH THE BLUE ARM!"

Fear and Loathing in San Diego

I had the opportunity to see Hunter S. Thompson live when I was nineteen years old. And if you're going to see Hunter S. Thompson live, there's only one way to do it: out of your freaking mind on LSD.

Every year Dr. Thompson would do a show the night before the Super Bowl in the

city that was hosting the event.

In 1988 I was stationed at the U.S. Naval Base in San Diego the year the pro football team in Washington D.C. played the Denver Broncos.

I went with one of my shipmates: a surfer from Lancaster, California named Skip.

He was a few years older than me but we were both in the same college program. He had a few community college credits under his belt and turned me on to music like Bauhaus and Love And Rockets. He encouraged me to keep a journal—something I never would have thought to do on my own—and read books by Hunter S. Thompson.

Skip was also the first person I took acid with and we went on adventures together all over the world. We drank cough syrup in Olongapo, got high in Yokosuka, and dropped acid every chance we got.

dropped acid every chance we got.

He thought of himself as a mentor of sorts and since he was old enough to buy beer and had a really good acid connection in the Antelope Valley, that was fine by me.

So on the eve of the Super Bowl, me, Skip, and three of his friends from the Mojave Desert piled into a van and went downtown to see Dr. Thompson at Symphony Hall.

Rob was tall and dark and wore work glasses. He had Hollywood ambitions and worked as a writer on the game show Supermarket Sweeps.

Chuck was a freckle-faced jock with reddish-blonde hair who was decked out in a referee's uniform because it was the Super Bowl. He was already in character and kept blowing his whistle in the van. He said when it stopped being annoying, that's when we'd know the LSD was working.

Dave was a quiet philosophy major type who the others deferred to in ways that were mysterious to me. I gathered that he was having a rough time with something that every one else knew about but me.

We parked the van and went inside. Right around show time the drugs started to come on like gangbusters, and we were a jittery, giggly mess. We may have double dosed because, you know, we wanted to be *sure*. But the details are kind of sketchy.

The things I do remember have stayed with me with diamond-sharp clarity.

I can tell you, for instance, that the acid was strong and speedy, causing considerable lower gastrointestinal distress. I felt like I'd swallowed a hive and if I took a shit a swarm of bees would fly out of my ass.

Our seats were in the balcony but there was no way we could sit still up there. We needed to roam, man, check things out, but you wouldn't believe the freaks in that place.

There were all these people in costumes. Fear and Loathing cosplay. It was like waking up inside a private joke that we all shared. To paraphrase Dr. Thompson: It was Saturday night in America and we were all native sons.

One guy really stood out: He was dressed in a Hawaiian shirt and had dyed his arm blue just like that scene in *Curse of Lono*. You know the one. Where the airplane passenger drops his stash in the toilet in the lavatory and has to reach inside to get it and stains his arm blue with that hideous blue dye.

This guy at the show, I don't know how he did it, but his arm was fucking BLUE. I'm talking smurf blue, avatar blue. That shit didn't look like it was EVER coming off.

We huddled together staring-not staring, pointing-not pointing, thinking we were being discrete when really we were screaming at each other, attracting all kinds of attention.

HEY! LOOK! LOOK AT THAT FREAK WITH THE BLUE ARM!

Rob couldn't stop staring at him. He kept pointing and giggling and telling us he was going to talk to him, which we all thought was a really bad idea.

The lights dimmed but it might as well have been a blackout because I lost track of every one. I was all alone in a sea of freaks giving a thunderous welcome to the God of Gonzo.

I scampered up to the balcony where I had a bird's eye view of security hassling Rob for hassling the guy with the blue arm, which didn't seem fair. If you're going to dress like a character in a Hunter S. Thompson book, you're going attract the attention of people whose minds are going warp speed on LSD.

Chuck obviously felt the same way I did because he tried to call a penalty on the security goons.

UNNECESSARY ROUGHNESS! UNNECESSARY ROUGHNESS!

Both Rob and Chuck were swiftly escorted out of the show before it even started and there was nothing I could do about it. I made up my mind to stay in my seat and not leave under any circumstances, even if it meant shitting myself.

The show started. The stage was set up like a parlor: wingback chair, Tiffany lamp, end table with a bowl of ice and a tumbler all arranged on a Persian rug.

Dr. Thompson came out and sat down in the chair and a woman walked out with a bottle of Chivas Regal and poured Dr. Thompson a drink like this was all some civilized affair.

He was bald and sideburned and wore dark aviator glasses. He was still lean and haunted-looking then. He didn't have the alcoholic bloat that would mark his later years, but he seemed very, very tired.

Dr. Thompson wasn't much of a monologist. There was a lot of fumbling with microphones. He spoke like someone accustomed to having conversations with himself. Someone would ask him a question and he'd ramble semi coherently, change the subject, and then ask us questions.

Love football but hate the fans. Lunatic in a Joe Theismann jersey asked me for an autograph and I pulled a knife on the dirty son of a bitch. Jesus it's cold in here. Is there a draft?

That's not a direct quote, but you get the point. I'm pretty sure he was as wrecked as we were

Someone asked him about Bill Murray's portrayal of Dr. Thompson in the movie Where the Buffalo Roam. If you haven't seen it, Where the Buffalo Roam is far superior to Terry Gilliam's Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas. Do I even need to say that Bill Murray owns Johnny Depp?

At first, Dr. Thompson struggled to find an answer. Someone called out from the crowd near the front of the stage: "He's an actor!"

Dr. Thompson zapped to attention. "That's right. He's an actor. Who said that?"

It was my shipmate Skip! And that's when things got really weird. Thompson invited Skip up on stage. "Get this man a drink!" he shouted off stage and we were treated to the same ritual of a beautiful woman walking from stage left with a tumbler on a tray.



JACKIE RUSTED

There were all these people in costumes.

It was like waking up inside a private joke that we all shared.

I don't know how he kept his composure, but Skip must have realized that this opportunity to drink Scotch with Hunter S. Thompson while frying on acid was a once in a lifetime deal. Skip plopped himself down on the edge of the stage and that's where he stayed for the rest of the show.

Meanwhile, I was freaking out in the balcony. I wanted to go up on stage. I wanted to drink with Dr. Thompson, too, but I was afraid if I stood up my rectum would fall out of my ass and a river of shit would run down the aisle and splatter on the poor people seated below. So I stayed put.

Dr. Thompson then told a story about Bill Murray I have never forgotten. He didn't refer to Bill Murray as an actor, but as a liar and a phony. He didn't seem to care for the man at all

Apparently, while Bill Murray was visiting Thompson's ranch in Colorado, he claimed to be an escape artist. Dr. Thompson

called bullshit on that but Murray insisted that he was professionally trained and certified.

So Dr. Thompson chained Bill Murray to a chaise lounge and threw him in the swimming pool where he nearly drowned. That's right. Hunter S. Thompson almost

That's right. Hunter S. Thompson almost killed Bill Murray, and on that January night in 1988 he said he was sorry that he didn't finish the job.

Think about that for a second. Imagine a world where Bill Murray is dead, Wes Anderson has no film career, and Hunter S. Thompson is alive and doing time in a maximum-security facility in Colorado.

How weird would that be?

During the official question-andanswer session that followed, Dave, looking haggard and haunted, asked Dr. Thompson for his thoughts about rehab. Surprisingly, Thompson was strongly in favor of spending time in rehab to rest and recuperate and encouraged Dave to go, but urged him to pay with a bad check. The crowd laughed, but Dave took the doctor at his word. When we regrouped outside, Dave seemed a bit more upbeat, happy to have a plan.

Chuck and Rob refused to believe that Skip had spent the entirety of the show on stage with Dr. Thompson. They couldn't wrap their minds around it, which was frustrating to Skip. What's the point of having a mind-blowing experience if your friends think you're bullshitting them?

As for me, the rumbling in my lower GI quieted as soon as the house lights came on. I was ready to party, but the crew from Antelope Valley had to drive back to the desert. They left us with some beer that we drank in the parking lot until the lights went off and there was nothing left to do but go back to ship with a little less fear and loathing in our hearts than when we left it.

-Jim Ruland



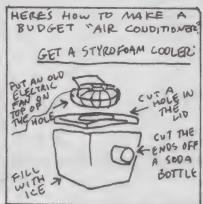
MY SIXTY-SIXTH COLUMN FOR RAZOR CAKE BY BEN SNAKEPIT





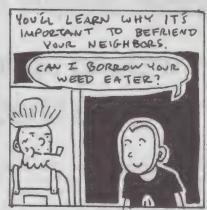




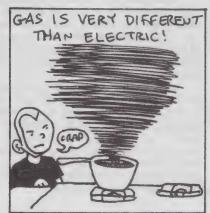
















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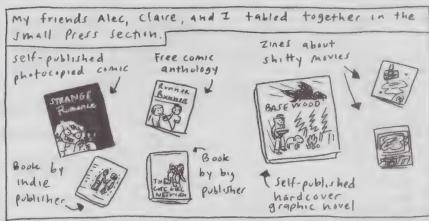


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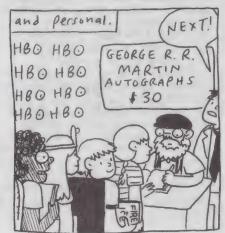


















HERE COMES SUCCESSI

"He wasn't wearing shoes and had a chest piece tattoo that said MR. DOG SHIT."

8-Track Heaven

When I moved to Austin, I didn't have a bed. I had a record player, a trunk full of Polaroids, and my grandpa's coin collection-none of those were things I could sleep on. As much as passing out on the floor night after night appeals to the part of me that wishes I was the fifth member of Mötlev Crüe, a bed is something that legitimizes you in society and keeps you from becoming a living episode of Intervention.

spent those first few weeks in Texas on Craigslist looking for giveaway furniture and eventually stumbled upon the holiest of "Free" posts:

"FREE queen-sized bed with 8-track player and lights built into it. Bed is covered in burgundy plush carpet. Must pick up."

I rubbed the sleep from my eyes. It was 8:30 AM. Today, I just so happened to be in the office early, waiting for a driving assignment at the weird job I had gotten measuring road ramps for the Texas Department of Transportation. I emailed the person who posted the ad and crossed my fingers that no one more qualified to own an 8-track-playing bed had already responded.

I got the call around lunchtime. "Yeah, man," said the person on the other end. "I don't need her anymore. You can come get

her tonight."

Her. The bed was a her. If this piece of furniture could come to life like a Pixar movie meets Fritz the Cat, she would definitely be what I projected for my own advanced adulthood: sagging body justhidden under a see-through gown, eyes madeup like a bobcat, wine-stained teeth, and the indomitable spirit of a tiger. Immediately after work, I hopped in the stolen truck, revved the engine accidentally, and drove to the address I was given.

The house was near the university, a part of town that was being slowly deconstructed and converted into a labyrinth of condominiums. The owner of the bed mentioned over the phone he was moving, and my guess was that his rented house had been sold and sacrificed to the gods of gentrification and trust-fund living. I made my way up the front steps. The grand southern porch was strewn with old furniture and trash. I pressed the doorbell, which sizzled and rang out somewhere inside.

The door swung open, revealing a man about forty and clean-cut, except he was wearing a threadbare dress shirt that was unbuttoned down the middle with cigarette holes near the pocket and the bottom seam. He had hair that was red and transparent at the same time, the way genetics like to sometimes mess with redheaded people. He wasn't wearing shoes and had a chest piece tattoo that said: MR. DOG SHIT.

"Hey. 'You're Cassie. And there She is." Mr. Dog Shit gestured to the top of a twelve-foot shelf on the porch where, covered in cobwebs, She was. And there was no way either of us was going to get Her down from there.

"Hmm," I thought, reconsidering the situation. "She seems a bit less accessible than I imagined she would be."

"You bring a friend?"

"No. I just moved here. I don't really have any.'

"Hmm." Mr. Dog Shit scratched his invisible five o'clock shadow. "How 'bout you come back tomorrow? As you can see, I'm in a bit of a state right now."

"Yes," I agreed. "It happens to the best of us." For a moment, we stared in quiet at the bed where it swayed a little from its inexplicable place on the top shelf of a very tall storage unit.

"You got any 8-tracks?" Mr. Dog Shit

"No, but I guess I'm gonna have to get some." The 8-track format was a step behind the times at the thrift stores back home. We did have a Louvin Brothers and an Edgar Winter cartridge at the record store I had worked at, but we used them to prop open the doors when it got hot out. I didn't dare mention that to my host.

"Nahhhh. Don't bother, don't bother. Come inside. I'll getcha some." I followed Mr. Dog Shit into a large room that doubled as the living room and the bedroom. There were 8-tracks from floor to ceiling. "Don't mind the mess. Landlord motherfucker didn't give me much notice."

There were 8-track displays, 8-track promotional posters, players, speakers. The elephant graveyard of a doomed format. We wandered into the kitchen and Mr. Dog Shit got up on a ladder, stumbling up the rungs. I braced myself for his fall. "Wanna hand me that box over there?"

I dragged over a large moving box and Mr. Dog Shit opened the kitchen cabinets. They did not contain food or dishes, but thousands of 8-track tapes.

"I have two of these." Toss. "Never did like this one." Toss. "Ooh, this one I gotta keep..." He threw them in the box, one-by-one, until it was full. Then I dragged over another box, and so it went for about an hour.

"Hey, uh..." I interrupted, occasionally stopping him to ask questions.

'Uh-huh," he said, looking at the back of a Bryan Ferry tape. "Need this one." He threw it in a separate pile.

"What was the first show you ever went to?"

"Oh, man." He paused, throwing down another tape. "It was Roky Erickson."

"From the 13th Floor Elevators?"

"Yeah. I was fifteen, so it was with the Aliens. What a great fuckin' show that was."

'Dude, you're not gonna believe me, but he's playing tonight.'

Mr. Dog Shit nearly fell off of his ladder. "No fuckin' way!" The fluorescent lights in the kitchen buzzed overhead in agreement of the weird celestial coincidence.

"I was gonna go, but if you want, 'cause you're giving me all this awesome stuff, I'll get your ticket and you can come with me.'

'Oh, man. That would be just fuckin' great!" His face fell. "Except I got court in the morning."

"Uh, court?" In my experience, anytime anyone had ever said that exact phrase, it meant possession, battery, or outrageous display of public nudity.

"Yeah..." He fished in his pocket and pulled out a business card.

Criminal Defense Attorney.

"You're a lawyer?" I asked, which probably came out sounding as incredulous as it really was.

"Yeah," Mr. Dog Shit said sheepishly. "I've got a couple cases in the morning."

"Well, I don't drink, so I'll take you there and drive you. It's really no trouble. Plus the company's paying for gas, so don't worry

"Man," said Mr. Dog Shit, standing precariously on the ladder, pitching a Chic 8-

^{*8-}Track Heaven is a website by Malcolm Riviera devoted to 8-track collecting. If you're into them as much as I am, you should also try track down the zine 8-Track Mind by Russ Forster.



STEVE THUESON

There were 8-track displays, 8-track promotional posters, players, speakers.

The elephant graveyard of a doomed format.

track into the box that was about to become mine. "That would be *really cool*."

I ran into my roommate at the show. Roky was playing on the outdoor stage at Emo's, shaking slightly, looking around for direction. I scouted the crowd and saw my roommate.

"Who's the dude you came with?" Matt yelled, gesturing toward Mr. Dog Shit where he stood near a wall. A hundred young punks screamed for Roky, and Mr. Dog Shit calmly mouthed the lyrics word-for-word.

"Dude, you wouldn't believe me if I told you, so I'm just gonna have to show you my room tomorrow."

Matt nodded and gave me a knuckle pound, re-tying his bandanna and walking back into the sea of sleeveless shirts and tight black pants, pumping fists into the thick summer air.

-Cassie J. Sneider



AMERICAN GRILLED CHEESE REVIEW

"What the fuck, do leather jackets cause cancer or something???"

MUSINGS ON THE HIGHLY NON-TRIVIAL MATTER OF WHETHER OR NOT TO SWAP OUT THE RAMONES 45 ON JUKEBOX FOR A DIFFERENT ONE

Tommy Ramone was the first Ramone I ever heard, by three beats. After the trio of portentous snare hits that began "Do You Wanna Dance," Tommy was followed by two syllables of Joey, quickly succeeded by a simultaneous cascade of Johnny's Mosrite® and Dee Dee's P-BassTM crashing down upon my barely-teenage head. It was pretty much a completely and utterly life-changing moment, the likes of which fate assigns us with utmost stinginess. I was riding down North Webster Street in the back seat of my dad's thennewish 1977 Buick® LeSabre™ with my mom and brother, listening to WKAU-AM from Kaukauna, Wisconsin-a small, funnysmelling town about twenty miles down the road from Green Bay, viewed as a sort of local Gary, Indiana analogue. It was my contention that, of any station within range, WKAU sucked the least, because they played the most old stuff from the '50s and '60s, which I liked better than the modern stuffhousewife pop, repulsive disco, and icky redneck rock designed for hairy degenerates. The DJ-probably wrapping up whatever mixture of Andy Gibb/Bee Gees/Captain & Tenille nonsense with which he was torturing me up to that point-came on, and informed us that after a few words from our sponsors, he'd be right back with "the new one by the Ramones." Up until this point, I was morally opposed to punk rock. I'd never actually heard it, of course-what twelve-year old had, in 1978?—but it sure seemed like more steps in the wrong direction, more gross crap for icky hairy violent degenerates with no style and no appreciation for anything that didn't suck. I had half a mind to tell Mom to change the station before our souls got contaminated by this "punk rock" business, but was curious enough that I figured I could stick it out for a few minutes-it couldn't be that much worse than the other crap on the radio, it probably wasn't mathematically possible. The commercials subsided, the DJ came back, Tommy hit the snare drum thrice, and I was suddenly, unexpectedly knocked over the noggin with the greatest thing I've ever heard in my life, "Do You Wanna Dance" by the Ramones. Three chords, full blast, over and over again, then they'd drop down to this low chord between choruses and verses, just to let you know that it was all gonna come back and bash you in the face again in a couple seconds, and the whole

manic roller coaster ride would start over again. To me, the Ramones landed right in my nervous system, as if beamed directly into my reptilian forebrain. I had ((for reasons not completely clear to me at this late date)) been looking at my watch during the song, timing it. At the song's conclusion, I yelled "that song was under two minutes long!" in utter amazement. A minute-fifty-something! That was completely unheard of ((they cheat a little on the 45 label, claiming a song length of 1:55, it's actually 1:52. DJs were lazy fucks; the longer the song, the less songs they had to play, and the less they had to workthus, every little bit of perceived length helped)). Even my mom-who listens to classical music and whose career Rock Apex was seeing Frankie Avalon playing in her hometown as a teenager, possibly making contact with his finger-said "that guitar! It's so electrifying!" Needless to say, over the course of that minute-fifty-whatever, my opinion on punk rock took a 180 degree turn, and punk, in turn, pretty much directed the course of my life from age thirteen on out. This is, of course, why it's so hard for me to come to grips with the fact that EVERY SINGLE PERSON WHO PLAYED ON THAT SONG IS NOW DEAD. Someone had to pay the price? I mean, what the fuck? All the original Ramones are dead? WHAT THE **ACTUAL FUCK IS GOING ON HERE???** There are more Beatles, more Comets, more Crickets alive and chirping than there are original Ramones! There's only one dead Rolling Stone, I think! Half the Who, most of Led Zeppelin, Ozzy freaking Osbourne are all still alive, and all the original Ramones are dead??? What the fuck, do leather jackets cause cancer or something??? Sheesh! Now, to be sure, Tommy Ramone was no one's favorite Ramone, at least not at first. For whatever reason, Johnny's cruel description of Tommy as "a really ugly guy who thought he looked like Peter Frampton" always stuck with me. Drummers, schmummers-bring on the next guy and keep it comin'. Who cares who's behind the kit, right? In the '90s, however, when pop punk's boom period made studious dissection of the Ramones catalogue all the rage, Tommy Ramone began to appear in a different light: #1, he was almost certainly the coolest Ramone, because he never played on a bad record. Ramones, Leave Home and Rocket to Russia are

undisputed classics, the blueprint, the godhead. Those first three Ramones albums-along with the first albums by the Clash and Sex Pistols—were the first five punk rock records I ever owned, and probably the first five punk rock records anybody should own. And, if you want a good laugh and/or cry, play the Tommy-era It's Alive back-to-back with post-Tommy live albums like Loco Live or Greatest Hits Live and weep at their no-clue shittiness. #2, Tommy was almost certainly the heart and soul and brains behind the early Ramones. All the other guys surely brought something cool and unique to the table, but Tommy was the guy who kind of defined the whole package, the "vision holder," if you will, for the very idea of Ramoney-ness. TOMMY RAMONE WROTE "BLITZKRIEG BOP." Think about that. The quintessential punk song, four chords and a pile of dust, written by the drummer ((although I guess Dee Dee came up with the title and some of the words)) who didn't even make it into their movie. Imagine a world without "Blitzkrieg Bop." This is a dumb world. Stop imagining it! The not-quite two decades' worth of Ramones output that followed Tommy's departure can be seen as the remaining guys building on/coasting off of/mutating the original idea, the ball that Tommy got rolling. And, #3, Ringo Starr might have achieved the greatest snare sound of all time, but Tommy got the best kick drum, tom, and cymbal sounds of any drummer, ever. If you disagree with anything in that last sentence other than the part about Ringo getting a better snare sound, go fuck yourself. So! To honor the passing of this undervalued prime mover, whose Framptony thumbprints are over all of our souls in some way, shape, or form, I have decided NOT to play Ramones, Leave Home, Rocket to Russia and It's Alive back to back. I figure I've heard those records to pieces, really, and still listen to them all the time, even to this day, so what's the point? Instead, I have decided to think about replacing the Ramones 45 I have on my jukebox, which is currently "Sheena Is a Punk Rocker" b/w "I Don't Care," ((chosen primarily because I own two copies and thus can sacrifice one to the rigors to which a forty-five-year-old record-playingcontraption will subject it)). I don't own their first 45, "Blitzkrieg Bop," nor their second, "I Wanna Be Your Boyfriend" ((both, I might



LEX BARRETT

Imagine a world without "Blitzkrieg Bop." This is a dumb world. Stop imagining it!

add, primarily written by Tommy [[I had a chance to pick up "Blitzkrieg Bop" for \$2.50 in 1985, but bought Pagans and Reducers and Roger Miller and Black Flag records instead, because, heck, I already had the album, the 45 was redundant, right? They go for about \$400 on eBay these days. Oops]])). I do have their third 45, "Swallow My Pride" b/w "Pinhead," their fourth, "Sheena," their fifth, "Rockaway Beach" b/w "Locket Love," and their sixth, the immortal "Do You Wanna Dance?" b/w the non-LP "Babysitter," the last original single to feature Tommy ((I searched for the better part of a year for this single after the WKAU episode, to no avail. I didn't own a copy until a girl shoved one in my locker my sophomore year of high school! She won it as a door prize at a dance at the YMCA or something, a record the DJ wanted to get rid of because he'd never play it or whatever. She liked Barry Manilow, never even listened to it! She wrote "Enjoy!" on the cover, in blue ball-point pen. This is probably the only record on earth that has been signed by Joey Ramone, Johnny Ramone, and Mary,

my girlfriend from 10th grade)). I also have a bootleg 45 with "Carbona Not Glue" and "I Can't Be" that purports to be Sub-Pop release #666, which I guess I'll toss into the mix ((I only count U.S. releases as "official" 45s, because #1, freaky small hole 45s don't fit my 1969 Rock-Ola® 440TM, and #2, that's how Johnny would like it)). I extract 45s by lesser lights like the 1910 Fruitgum Company and Boris The Sprinkler ((who?)), and insert my classic Ramones 45s in their stead. "Swallow My Pride" is, amazingly, the only single released from Leave Home, and not really one of the band's more notable songs from that album. Despite the inherent oddness of "Swallow My Pride" being chosen over "Oh Oh I Love Her So" or "Suzy Is a Headbanger," it sounds great on my moneygrabber! It stays! psychedelic "Sheena" is the first of three singles from Rocket to Russia. I was actually thinking of just replacing it, but it sounds so good I decide I'll keep it in addition to "Swallow My Pride." "Rockaway Beach" is the band's highest-charting single ((you can thank the

marketing geniuses at SireTM for releasing "Don't Come Close" and "Needles and Pins" as singles from Road to Ruin instead of the obviously fucking obvious "I Wanna Be Sedated" for this fact)). The B-side, "Locket Love," plays first. This is a really underrated song, I think. I decide to keep it on the jukebox permanently before the A-side even hits. "Do You Wanna Dance?" plays next, followed in short order by the non-LP bucklepolisher "Babysitter." How can I turn away the seven-inch plastic circle that started it all? It stays, too. The bootleg "Carbona Not Glue" doesn't even need to play before my mind's made up: I'm keeping ALL my Tommy-era Ramones 45s on my jukebox, where they can be scratched and pulped and shredded and gunked up and lose all their resale value, all in the name of rock 'n' roll.

Yeah, like you didn't see that coming.

Gabba Gabba Etc.,
-Nørb





"Fucking cancer. I'm against it."

R.I.P. Tommy Ramone

I blocked off some vacation time late last year so that I would be able to go to NYC for the week this past July to tag along with my wife Yvonne. She attends the LAMC (Latin Alternative Music Conference) just about every year there. A couple of her best friends (Flora and Alma) came out too, so we all had a good time checking out some of the artists Yvonne works with, as well as dicking around the city and hitting some of the better places to pull up a seat and eat. We even made time to make the trek out to Totonno's in Coney Island (home of that real live bunch, the Warriors) to mow down on some of the world's most insane thin crust pizza with our homies (and current Astoria, Queens transplants) Jenny and Andrew.

Later in the week, on the early evening of Friday the 11th, I caught a post on my Facebook feed from my pal Curt that Tommy Ramone had passed away that afternoon. What? What the fuck? The first thing I thought was that this was another Chuck Biscuits jive-ass death scam, being that we were out all day, actually roaming in and around the Lower East Side, and not a single word was mentioned about this news at all. Nothing. I immediately switched on the television in our hotel room, figuring that every local news channel in the greater NYC area would have at least some information.

Watching... waiting... watching. Again, nothing. Not even on NY1, the city's twenty-four hour news channel. I grabbed my phone and started scouring the internet—not a damn thing. As I was tooling through the innerwebs, my buddy and Ramones-sister-in-arms Donna Ramone texted me, inquiring as to what the fuck was going on out here. I told her I was trying to get some answers, trying to clarify what we've heard. It started to feel rather Twilight Zone-ish right at this point.

Again, what the fuck? Here I am, sitting smack dab in the general vicinity from which the Ramones were spawned, and there's not a stitch of information about the final founding member passing on? I texted a few other friends out there. Everyone was scratching their heads. I contacted Curt, let him know where I was, and how NYC and the rest of the world connected through the internet has zero to say about what happened earlier that day with Tommy. I asked if what he'd heard was some kind of rumor, and he then sadly assured me that, unfortunately, it's not a rumor at all. Tommy had lost his battle

against bile duct cancer that he had been fighting over a few years. Homeboy was in hospice care at his home in Ridgewood, Oueens. He was sixty-five years old.

Curt went on to explain the reason there wasn't anything in the newswires just yet was because Tommy's surviving family and his long-time partner Claudia Tienan (who was also the other half of Tommy's bluegrass outfit, Uncle Monk) insisted Tommy's friends and fans hear the news through one of Tommy's oldest industry friends, Andy Schwartz. Andy had worked as the editor at the New York Rocker, one of the city's bigger punk/new wave mags at the time in the late '70s through the early '80s. He continued writing, most recently working as a copywriter. Andy's as reputable as they come in the music writing circles, so learning that the news was coming directly from him sent my stomach dropping like a plummeting elevator.

It was official: all four founding fathers from Forest Hills were once again reunited. I contacted Andy, gave him my regards, and shared some mutual Ramones memories. It was only a matter of one to two hours that the news and entertainment sites were plastered with headlines about Tommy's passing. Friends from all over the place called and texted me throughout the next day. A few of my pals I talked with the next morning remarked that as fucked up news as this was, it seemed ironically fitting that I, one of their biggest fans, was in town when it happened. But I just couldn't wrap my head around the idea that each one of the fearsome foursome were now all gone. Even three weeks later as I'm sitting here writing this, the reality of the fact is still hard to comprehend.

It felt a bit surreal walking around the next day, streets and trains crammed with the usual bustle of folks going to and fro. All I could keep thinking about while staring at all the faces passing by is that the city was now four people short. Void of four insanely dedicated artists who had turned the world of rock'n'roll on its ear some forty years ago, started out on these very streets. I couldn't help but feel for Monte Melnick, one of Tommy's oldest friends and bandmates since junior high, with whom he built and ran the infamous Performance Studios, an old rehearsal and recording loft where the Ramones fetus was nurtured into a rock'n'roll force to be reckoned with. Monte also went on to be the Ramones' tour manager from their early years all the way to the band's

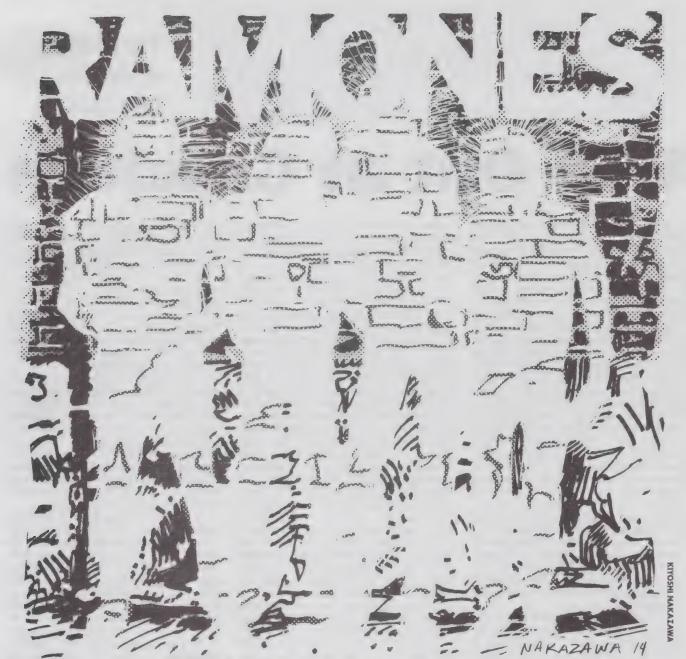
end. I emailed him my regards, both of us noting it was a sad day, indeed.

As sad a fact that Tommy's demise has permanently marked the physical end of one of the most important eras in rock 'n' roll, it's just as important to keep in perspective the influence he had on the band's sound and vision. It still resonates through those first three Ramones albums he played on. (Not to mention his performance on the band's first blistering live record, It's Alive considered widely amongst music freaks to be one of the best live albums ever recorded with no overdubs or re-records. What you hear is exactly what the crowd heard). Yes, resonating to the level of where these albums continue to influence a healthy majority of musicians across the board some thirty-four to thirty-eight years later.

Without delving too deep into Ramones History 101 (which you should be read up on to begin with), Tommy's drum technique was a result of what he was hearing in his head when the band started out with Joey on drums along with Johnny and Dee Dee honing their chops on their respective guitars in 1974. After the band started taking on its own identity with early versions of their first songs, Joey's slash and bash drum style just wasn't cutting it. Tommy suggested Joey be up front on the mic between Johnny and Dee Dee, being that he was already singing a lot of vocals with Dee Dee.

The only thing missing was a drummer who could lay down that frantic, eighth note beat that Tommy was hearing in his head. Not a drummer they tried out was making this vision happen, even with Tommy sitting down and showing them what the idea was on the kit. Finally, the rest of the band told Tommy he should just play drums. Never seriously picking up a pair of sticks in his life (production and engineering was his bag), he agreed, and for the next four years the Ramones blew people's minds across the world, setting their own bar that's yet to be touched. Not only was Tommy the drummer in the band's golden years, but he was an integral part of production on a shit-ton of their recordings, while in and out of the band. It most definitely should be noted here that Tommy also produced one of the greatest albums of 1985: The Replacements' debut on Sire Records, Tim.

To say that Tommy's technique didn't heavily influence or inspire an ongoing legion



ি Was official: all four founding fathers from Forest Hills were once again reunited.

of punk rock peeps of the drum kit would be straight up lying. Yes, of course, he wasn't the only one swinging that double-time, 4/4 deep-in-the-pocket beat at that time, but he's arguably the guy that almost all the premier punk rock drummers were aspiring to/borrowing from. This brain-born technique was also passed down to Ramones drummers Marky and Richie, each respectively adding their own power and flavor into the mix, but keeping the original recipe in check.

People can talk out their ass all they want about how a drummer isn't the most important aspect of a band, but anyone who's spent time in a rehearsal loft, onstage, or in recording studio knows—clearly—that your drummer is just as important an aspect as your guitarist, bassist, and singer. In a band, you're as strong as your weakest link, and if your drummer sits there struggling behind the kit like a challenged chimp trying to peel a banana, your band is going to be fucked six ways from Sunday. Tommy delivered the rhythm for the Ramones in spades, as well as sharing his big picture vision for the group. And for that, I will be forever grateful—just as grateful for Johnny, Dee Dee, and Joey bringing it full force to the table to form one of the most spectacular rock'n'roll bands that changed my life.

Thanks, Tommy. Say "hey" to the other three nogoodniks for me. I'm sure they've all been waiting impatiently for you, over at Arturo Vega's new loft up in the sky.

Fucking cancer. I'm against it.

Erdélyi Tamás aka Thomas Erdelyi aka Tommy Ramone January 29, 1949 ~ July 11, 2014

-Designated Dale designateddale@yahoo.com



THE DINCHOLE REPORTS

"Punk rock waits for no chicken."

Wig Out at Clucko's

I grew up in a suburb. My mailing address was technically Green Bay, but most people who lived in Green Bay proper would call my neighborhood "Allouez." Green Bay had one or two nicer suburbs in the '70s and '80s, but Allouez was thought of as a nicer, quieter area, I guess. It wasn't the type of suburb you see around Los Angeles or even Chicago; it was a suburb of Green Bay. Somehow that decreased its relative "suburban-ness." I could bike up to the Red Owl grocery store on Webster Avenue about ten minutes away and gaze across the river at Lambeau Field. Yes, The Packers is all we think about.

Anyway, one day while riding my skateboard around the block on some snowless day, I ran into another fellow skater who looked to be as anti-Top-40 as me. Teenage skaters were a bit rare in the Bay area at that time, so we stopped and chatted about skating and punk rock. His name was Jeff. Jeff became an awesome, creative, and interesting friend. A year later I was drumming for his band, Dada-Waiata. We played a few shows around Green Bay, the high school talent show, and one out-of-town gig in a roller rink up in Sturgeon Bay, WI. Then some of us graduated high school and moved off. Band done.

Jeff was a few years older than I, and had a few years more experience with the punk rock thing. When you are fifteen, a few years seems huge. Sometimes we would just sit in his bedroom and listen to his punk rock records while he worked on his zine. I was just trying to soak up all the punk rock I could, still being a newcomer to it all. Jeff was really taken in by the newest False Prophets album on Alternative Tentacles. He was also a rabid fan of the Dead Kennedys. This really came through when he sang for Dada-Waiata. It was sometime in 1984 and I felt I had some catching up to do with older punk rock.

I will never forget when he pulled out his copy of the first Ramones album and threw it on. Since I was already listening to so much newer punk rock, this already sounded "dated," if you will, but it still sounded exciting and different. I immediately taped the album and listened to that cassette endlessly. How could something so simple, so straight-forward, so... simple sound so great? Three

chords. No solos. Simple drumming. Catchy, simple lyrics with a bubblegum twist. I started trying to drum like this album. Trying is not doing. It was not easy. This was when I first acknowledged the importance of some guy listed on the album as Tommy Ramone.

Jeff seemed genuinely shocked that I had never really listened to this album. He tried to impress upon me the huge importance of the album. I looked at the album cover. They looked like the kind of guys my mom would not want me hanging out with, so I listened to them even more. What's odd is that I never actually bought the album. With my dubbed copy, and the local college radio station playing the Ramones often enough, it just seemed like something I never had to buy.... yet that album had such a crazy influential effect on me. Every song was, is, and forever will be imprinted on my brain. I figure some day I will finally buy the vinyl when I'm turning eighty or something, just to be a fucker.

Anyway, fast forward about six years. My old friend Jeff had moved to Madison after high school to study film and bartend at the legendary O'Cayz Coral. Soon after that he moved to New York City and was doing something in his field of study. I had just embarked on my very first tour with a punk rock band. I was all revved up and ready to rock the East Coast when I heard the bad news. Jeff was leaving his apartment building in NYC, just about to leave the elevator on the bottom floor. Some maniac with a gun was on a rampage and ran into the elevator trying to escape. My friend Jeff was fatally shot for no real reason other than that he happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. I tried to enjoy the punk rock touring action, but my mind was often contemplating the senselessness of the loss. Jeff was the first real friend outside my family who had passed away. To this day, I still think of him every time I hear the first Ramones album.

Another six years later, I was at Coney Island High, the swanky punk rock club in New York City. I had had a few beers and was enjoying the birthplace of punk rock. Then I was vaguely introduced to Stephan of the False Prophets. If my flimsy memory serves me right, he was working the coat check counter or something of that nature. I became star-struck and quickly stood

on a chair and yelled out, "I AM THE TAXIDERMIST!" I'm not sure if he was mildly amused or mildly annoyed, but I sort of wandered away and thought about Jeff again. Then it occurred to me that I was in NYC, the city he died in.

Life works in weird circles.

Over the years, I watched various Ramones from that first album cover pass away. Tommy was the last original Ramone still to walk the earth. I'll never forget buying the Replacements Tim cassette and listening to it in my walkman every blizzardy winter morning on the school bus. I'll never forget when I figured out that Tommy had produced that recording. I used to walk past Jeff's house every morning that winter on the way to the bus stop. Jeff told me to watch Saturday Night Live the night that the Replacements were the musical guests. My dad asked me to turn the channel while they were on. I pretended not to hear him.

I met Joey Ramone at one of his birthday parties at Coney Island High once. It was a rather quick affair, small talk and a photo. I met Marky Ramone at his Green Bay show with the Intruders. We shared small talk and I don't remember much else. That's the extent of my Ramones inperson encounters. I've played in a few Ramones-related musical projects over the years. Somehow, they just always continue to be a relevant musical part of my life. Sometimes I will hear the chanting from Blitzkrieg Bop played over the loudspeakers at Lambeau Field. Life is weird and it's a wiggly world.

A few weeks ago I woke up with a mighty hangover in Milwaukee. I had a few hours before parade time. One quick look online brought the sad news that Tommy Ramone had passed away. Once again, I was on the verge of a crazy madcap punk rock adventure and found myself deflated by the news of another death. It occurred to me that Tommy was the last scruffy guy on that album cover to pass on. Again, I thought of Jeff and how he introduced me to this band, what this band's first album did for me, and now they were all dead. I had a parade appearance, a food fight, and plenty beers scheduled for my next few hours. Punk rock waits for no chicken.



What was meant to be a tribute turned into a travesty.

Dinghole Report #144: **Rock and Roll Ramones** Ruckus.... and Food Fight! (Rhythm Chicken sighting # 685)

My Hen and I had already run to the grocery store and blew over fifty bucks on the food fight artillery (hot dog buns, green beans, oatmeal, tortillas, white bread, marshmallows, rice, coco puffs, and a shit-ton of toilet paper). Back at the float prep area, we emptied cans of Hamms and decorated the float with the empties while I created the posters. On the back I made one big poster that simply read "Tommy Ramone, R.I.P." I made another poster with a cartoonish Tommy Ramone head with chicken ears and a carrot. Bill and Dan from Rushmor Records (who graciously sponsor the float) saw the sign and both agreed it was a fitting homage to the legend.

I also had a bizarre mannequin head that serves as a wig stand in my car (not sure why). I mounted the head and wig on the top of my bass drum, just for last minute Schlitz and squiggles. I thought it looked good. A few beers later and we were inching through the parade, anxiously awaiting the food fight in front of Rushmor. The crowd of rowdy rockers outside the record store were drunk with anticipation as the Chicken's float rolled near. My ruckus elves were ready for battle.

The float did a Y-turn and backed up to face the crowd of record store cretins. The food fight began. I thought of Tommy and started pounding out the drumming intro to Rock and Roll Radio. It is, I believe, the most memorable Ramones drum part. The food fight was in full force! The chaos was overwhelming! People yelled out, "TOMMY!" I threw a huge bag of green beans on the screaming crowd! The insanity was mounting! Then, I let the spirit of ruckus take me over and... AND... I GRABBED THE WIG AND THREW IT AT THE CROWD. The food fight continued until we slowly pulled away and faced the rest of the parade route.

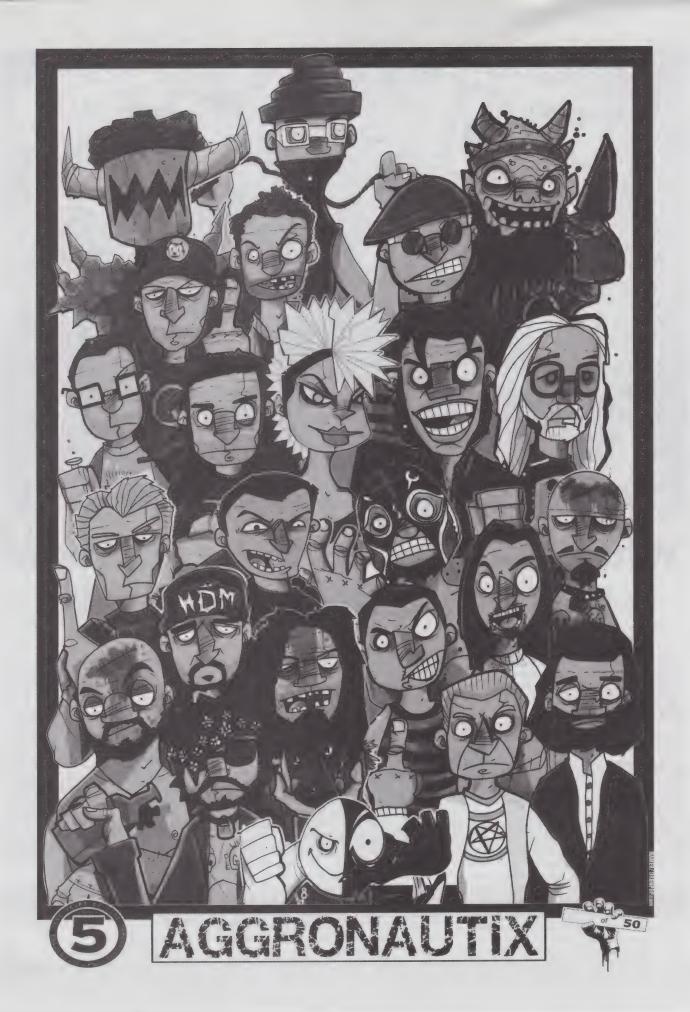
The parade ends down near the South Shore Yacht Club on the shore of Lake Michigan. I dropped my sticks and staggered away with a beer. WHAT HAD I DONE? I played "Rock and Roll Radio"? THAT WAS ON END OF THE CENTURY WITH MARKY DRUMMING! And then I had to throw the WIG? Boy! Talk about adding insult to injury. I'm sure Dale and Nørb are shaking their heads over this. I hang my chicken head in shame over this gross Ramones confusion. What was meant to be a tribute turned into a travesty. Well, I still don't have that first album.

While driving back up to my northwoods' soup shop later that afternoon, it finally occurred to me that the very first time I met Jeff on his skateboard, for reasons unclear to me at the time, he was wearing a goofy-looking wig. I AM THE WIG-THROWING TAXIDERMIST!!!

-Rhythm Chicken



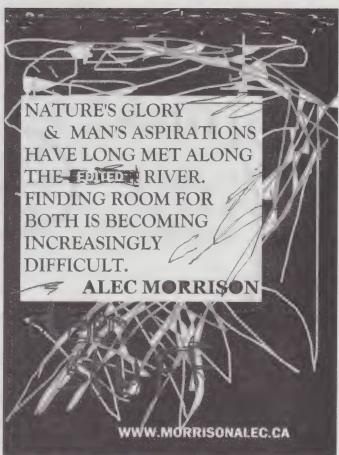
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THEY MADE IT SOUND LIKE SUCH A
BIG DEAL, LIKE IT WAS THE BEST
THING THAT EVER HAPPENED TO
THEM. AGE'S OWN SEEPING
STORIES...



THEY MUST NOT GET VERY MUCH SLEEP. "

WERE NEVER WORTH BRAGG-ING ABOUT.



50 HE ASKED HIS GOOD FRIEND, TRIKE LANE, IF SHE WOVLD SLEET WITH HIM.





LATER THAT NIGHT THEY SLEPT, THERE WAS NO S-E-X BECAUSE AGE DIDN'T KNOW SLEEPING MEANT S-E-X.



222222 ...

IN THE MORNING HE DIDN'T FEEL ANY DIFFERENT BUT DIDN'T WANT TO SEEM LIKE HE DIDN'T GET IT.



@ LUCKYNAKAZAWA

IN FACT HE SLEPT TERRIBLE THAT NIGHT AS HE DISCOVERED TRIKE WAS A SLEEP KICKER BUT HE PELT LIKE HE HAD TO LIE AND BRAG TO HIS FRIENDS REGARDLESS.



AND HE'LL DO IT AGMN + AGAIN!

KN 8/14



"Why I hate talking about race."

Black, White, and Everything In-Between

I wanted to unbuckle the passenger-side seatbelt and slap my friend upside the head.

It was a late Saturday afternoon as we wound our way down the 57, headed for an early dinner in Anaheim. The traffic was light as Angel Stadium began creeping into view when I was blindsided by a subject matter I've come to almost always loathe.

"Being Japanese doesn't make me who I

am," I said, flustered.
"Yeah, it does," he told me staring

straight ahead.

I'm trying to grow as a person and act more like the adult I'm supposed to be, so I held back on unnecessary violence. Plus, the car was actually in motion and I wanted to live to at least see the next freeway exit.

There I was trying to enjoy my Saturday and the conversation on race and ethnicity that's now been sprinkled throughout my teen and adult years had reared its head once again-and from a friend no less. Couldn't

we just talk about music?

I don't like people who judge other people. I don't like being pigeon-holed into a category based on meaningless labels so that someone thinks they've moved one step closer to "figuring me out" using the least amount of time. So when people try to tell me that my ethnicity makes me who I am, it strikes a deep nerve in me. The even keel and lack of emotion in my friend's voice pinched at that nerve just a little more.

"Nah, not really," I said trying to match

the apathy in his voice.

He repeated his emotionless statement.

My irritation level rose.

"I listen to punk rock. I'm a reporter. I like Spam. I collect Russian nesting dolls and refuse to throw away my collection of Baby-Sitters Club books (which include the Mystery and Super Specials series, thank you very much). Those are the weird quirks that make me who I am. Being Japanese isn't," I said with far more force and edge in my voice.

"Okay, but you're still Japanese. It's who

"Okaaaay," I said slowly.

I dropped the conversation. There was no need to ruin the weekend talking about something that would have turned into a debate on a topic I don't even like talking about.

Plus, I'm bad at debates and proving my point. All sorts of arguments start running through my head that get spewed out in complete disarray with no coherence. The

pitch in my voice usually goes from zero to Minnie Mouse in 2.3 seconds. It's not pretty.

You by now may be asking what the hell my problem is. Why don't I like talking about race? What's the big deal?

I get it. Different cultures are interesting. Learning about them is fun. I agree. Those are the details about someone that end up organically being found out as time goes on

with any friendship.

Think about it. You can go to a show or a zine fest and run into so many new and interesting people. You bond over the music or that mutual love for a culture that promotes creating things as means of self-expression. You connect-not on the basis of skin color, or class, or gender-but through something far more profound. And, then somewhere on down the line once that friendship is forged, you share interesting details about your ethnicity.

So when I say I don't like talking about race, I'm talking about something completely different that's made me think maybe-as a society-we really haven't progressed that far from the days of segregation. I'll allow that some strides have been made, but when a person's skin color is the first thing a person sees when meeting him or her and instant judgments and assumptions are made? That's not progress to me.

I've lost count of how many times I've been approached by complete strangersbeginning from around the time of junior high-who asked, "What are you?"

The first few times it happened, I was perplexed. What should my answer be?

'Um, I don't know. I'm a seventh grader." But the more I got asked that, I began to understand what someone was driving at. "What do you mean?" I'd ask.

"Are you Chinese? Korean? Pilipino?..." I'd give my answer and the response would usually be, "Oh" or a head nod.

The exchanges rarely went past that and I was left wondering if I gave the wrong answer. I'll never forget the time a girl asked me that—just randomly walked up to me in high school—and then just walked away after I responded. What did it mean now that this person who I didn't know had this kernel of information about me? I didn't form any lasting friendships from the dialogues that started out this way nor did I get any interesting conversation from it, so what was the point?

I'll stop and interrupt myself here to interject that I understand the difference between what I just described and a person

who's just genuinely curious about my ethnicity, the latter of which I have no problem with and can appreciate that desire for awareness. The former is something I see as far more destructive to a society when labels have to be affixed to people, supplanting all the weird or interesting quirks that make me who I am.

In my own experience, the question of who I am has only come to serve as a point of distinction—a difference between myself and the next person or a feature someone thinks should automatically make us besties because it's a shared commonality. Sorry, my relationships don't grow and last like that. All I'm trying to accomplish in this lifetime is to find true connections with other people in the human race who I can hang out with to get through the shittier times and celebrate the happier times with before I'm six feet under. "Why waste time looking at what makes us different?" is the motto I have long operated under.

I don't speak Japanese. I've never been to Japan. I know very little about the culture, although I'm not opposed to learning more

I grew up in Orange County. My parents grew up in Orange County. My Grandpa was born in the South Bay area and was later a flower farmer in Orange County. The color of my skin has had nothing to do with shaping how I define myself. The story may be different for some people, but that's mine.

A few weeks later, I found myself hanging out at my friend's house, wasting time, watching TV. It's the same friend who declared that being Japanese makes me who

He revealed something even more interesting about himself: "I get along better with minorities.'

"What's that?" I asked.

"I just find I get along better with people

"People of color. What does that even mean?" I asked. I made no attempt to conceal the squeal in my voice.

Here we go again, I thought to myself. I was about to zone out with a really great lineup of reality TV and this had to come up again. Good lord, why now?

"Everyone's got a little color on them," I continued, "even someone who's white."

"No, they don't," he told me matter-



I'm still trying to figure that one out. We all are, aren't we?

"Huh? Yeah, they do. They're not transparent, are they?"

"I've just found I get along better with minorities. You don't have to agree with me."

I could tell the conversation was going to go south—which would have basically entailed me going apeshit on this person—so I decided to stop it before I blew a fuse over something not even worth arguing about.

I remember a 100-level Anthropology course I took in college as part of my general education requirement that was led by a professor who liked to use the phrase "people of color." He was grilling someone once and she interrupted his monologue on "persons of color" to check him on his wording and ask him to clarify what he meant by that phrase since we're all people of color. I remember thinking how refreshing it was to hear that. That's the only thing I remember from that class.

If I'm a person of color and being Japanese makes me who I am, then I should have appreciated the article link a co-worker sent to me a few months back about some Japanese films, even though I've never once expressed interest in films in general.

I didn't realize she sent me a link until I had a chance to go through my emails at the end of the day, reading first her apology about how she was sorry if she offended me by sending that link.

I just hadn't had time to look through every email that was not a top priority, but the abuse of work email is another subject for another day.

So, what am I? I'm still trying to figure that one out. We all are, aren't we?

I've learned to not get so upset by it like how I used to be in high school. Some people tell me I'm overly sensitive about the subject, but when you observe a pattern for more than twenty years it's hard not to draw conclusions.

I've come to the realization at this point in my life that there will always be people who only see skin deep, or that I'm a woman or that I'm from Orange County or that I'm this or I'm that. That makes me sad. Those subtle judgment calls are so dangerous—for everyone.

Alice Bag's piece for Razorcake ("We Were There") hit the nail on the head with

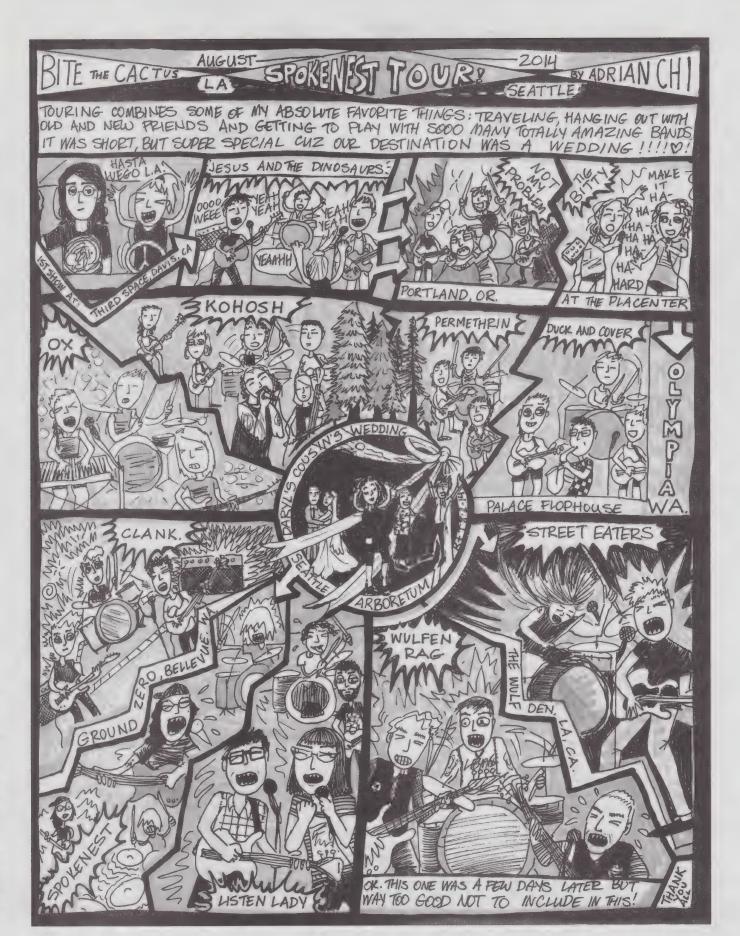
this one when she and many others in her piece talked about punk being its own race, in a sense. It's a community whose members are pulled from all walks of life. Anyone can join. Anyone can participate. The common thread is the music.

When I was doing a punk zine (that's long been defunct), I never once got that question—after all the bands and individuals I crossed paths with who I likely would have never met were it not for the music.

That, to me, is what I choose to zero in on after saying all of this. That experience made me realize—and, yeah, I get this may sound very Pollyanna-ish—that it's very well possible that, as a whole, maybe one day we'll move beyond the stupid labels to become one big race. Yeah, pretty idealistic I know, but it's better to believe that than to think everything's fucked, don't you think? Racism, classism, and sexism are indiscriminate; it's on all of us in the end.

-Kari Hamanaka

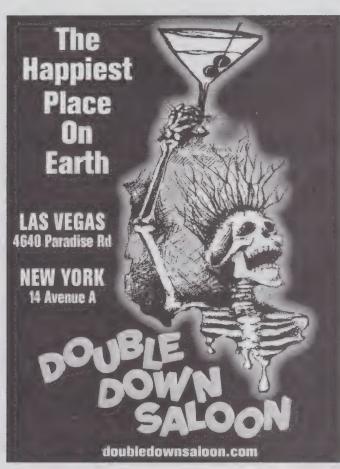








Dan Monick's Photo Page Jeff Electric, Los Angeles, 07/04/14











Rachel Framingheddu's Photo Page
Bad Cop / Bad Cop, live at KXLU

ONE PUNK'S GUIDE TO ONE PUNK TO ONE PUNK

ILLUSTRATIONS MARCOS SIREF

LAYOUT

BECKY BENNETT

've been rejected a lot—roughly six hundred and fifty times since I started counting a decade ago.

Not by love interests and not by jobs, but by potential publishers. More often than not, the rejections come via form letter: "We appreciate your interest in (insert publisher name here). We reviewed your story. Unfortunately, it's not right for us."

Rejection is just part of being a writer. It still stings though. I believe in the stories I create. I work hard on them. Like most writers, when I get a rejection I sometimes can't help but think the editor didn't get what I was trying to do.

In the late 2000s, I got a rejection that forced me to turn that question on myself. It forced me to reevaluate how I define my writing. It forced me to ask, "Do I get what I'm trying to do?" That

rejection opened my eyes to a new genre of fiction.

The rejection, which was particularly abrasive, came from a horror publisher. You see, up until that point, I thought I was a horror writer. I mean, my stories typically have monsters in them, so they must be horror, right? What else could they be? This rejection letter answered that question.

It said, "We don't publish bizarro fiction."

What The Fuck Is Bizarro Fiction?

There is a book called *The Haunted Vagina*. It's about a guy who hears noises emanating from his girlfriend's crotch, so he goes spelunking in her vagina and discovers another world inside, a world where animated skeletons wander around, threatening the poor citizens, who seem to be made of gummy candy. Written by a madman named Carlton Mellick III, this book is a cornerstone of the bizarro genre.

After getting that fateful rejection letter, I dug into this and other Mellick books. There are nearly fifty of them now, all with outrageous titles like *The Menstruating Mall*, *Armadillo Fists*, *Razor Wire Pubic Hair* and *Satan Burger*. Then I moved on to explore other writers in

this burgeoning literary movement.

I discovered a genre that contained everything I was looking for in books. Not surprisingly, these were the same qualities that attracted me to punk when I was a teenager. Bizarro fiction is crazy, energetic, fast-paced, and raw. It's weird and fucked up. It's DIY. It's a legit literary scene and anyone can be a part of it.

But what the fuck is it?

Back when there were mom and pop video rental stores, the good ones had a cult section where they tossed the movies that didn't fit anywhere else: the David Lynch films, the Troma flicks, *El Topo* and *Pink Flamingos*. Bizarro Central, the online home of the genre, describes bizarro fiction as the cult section of the literary world. That's as good a definition as any.

What ties the genre together is a commitment to doing weird, surprising shit. Elements of horror and science fiction are common. Grossness is not unusual. Humor is almost always present. However,

no two bizarro books are the same.

Mellick's books tend to be written in a relatively straightforward narrative style. Weird shit goes on in the story, but the writing itself isn't that weird stylistically (although there may be the occasional doodle or a chart like the one in *Punk Land* showing the things the narrator would like to see shooting out of his pet dildo's pee hole, like ninja stars and Watermelon Ice Gatorade).

On the other end of the spectrum are guys like D. Harlan Wilson. In his short story collection *They Had Goat Heads*, he gets experimental in style and subject. "The Movie That Wasn't There," opens with the line "I go to a movie and notice I'm starring in it." The narrator's story and the film on screen blur together almost immediately, creating a delirious effect.

A book has to be weird to be bizarro. However, weirdness alone does not make a book bizarro. Many people have tried to pinpoint the ingredient that makes a book a bizarro book. To me, it's the element of surprise. A book may have weird elements that are established at the outset and create an internal logic that makes the events that follow not particularly surprising. Bizarro books are surprising from start to finish. There's zero chance of predictability.

Where Did Bizarro Fiction Come From?

Getting into the roots of anything is murky business. Weird fiction has a long history. It reaches back before the pulp era of the early 1900s and *Weird Tales* magazine. It runs through William S. Burroughs' *Naked Lunch* and Georges Bataille's *Story of the Eye*, up to modern guys like Bentley Little and Joe R. Lansdale.

But bizarro fiction is a distinct entity within the realm of weird fiction, set apart by its style, its subject matter, and its complete unwillingness to take itself seriously, as well as by the common ground and teamwork of its practitioners. It has been called a movement, and behind any movement is a group of people working together. From the start, that has been one of the hallmarks of the bizarro genre.

A zine called *Earwig Flesh Factory* debuted in the late '90s, created by Mellick and William Simmons and published by Eraserhead Press. The Dream People followed in the early 2000s, along with other webzines and print zines dedicated to publishing stuff that didn't fit anywhere else. They ran work by people like Mellick, Wilson, Kevin L. Donihe, and Vincent Sakowski.

Eraserhead published its first books in 2001 with this same group of writers. Wilson's *The Kafka Effect*, Sakowski's *Some Things Are Better Left Unplugged*, Donihe's *Shall We Gather at the Garden*, and Mellick's notorious *Satan Burger* were all unleashed upon the world. Other publishers sprang up, following suit, including Raw Dog Screaming Press and Afterbirth Books.

In the mid-2000s, people noticed that this was all happening at once. Labels were thrown around: "New absurdism" and "Irreal." Nothing stuck. Then author Kevin Dole 2 wrote a piece somewhere in internet land about what this shit should be called, and in the ensuing

discussion, the term "bizarro fiction" was coined.

Many of the people involved at the very start are still involved, still making weird books and still working together. Some have branched off and formed their own publishing companies. Eraserhead, originally based in Arizona, has since moved to Portland, which has become the epicenter of the bizarro universe. Many bizarro authors live there. Bizarro books can be found on the shelves of Powell's downtown. There are bizarro events routinely held in local bars and bookstores.

Carlton Mellick III

Detractors of bizarro have gone so far as to say it's a one-man genre, and Carlton Mellick III is the one man. While it's true that he typically releases four books a year, all of surprisingly high quality and originality (recent titles include *Hungry Bug* and *The Tick People*), and he has established perhaps the biggest fan base in the genre, he isn't the be-all, end-all. Still, he and Eraserhead Press are likely the glue that keeps it all together, so it's important to discuss what he's doing.

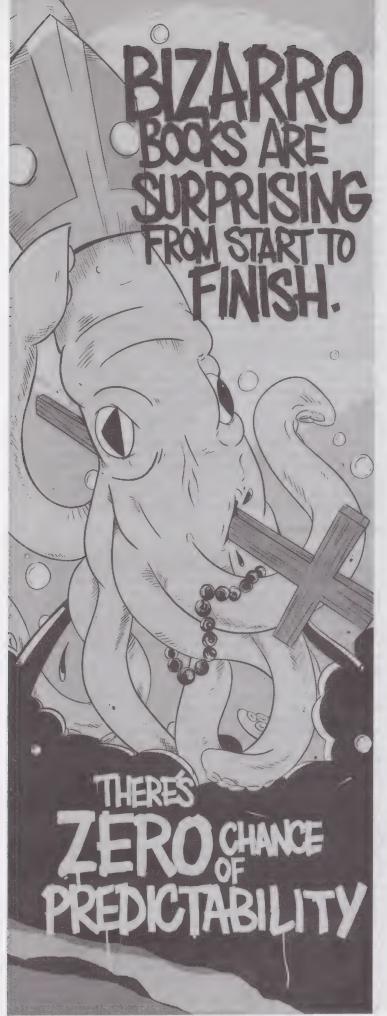
It's clear that he comes at writing with a different attitude than most. He certainly doesn't look like a writer, with his shaved head and unruly mutton chops, often wearing a priest's collar and posing like a lunatic in publicity photos. He's admitted to using the old B-movie technique of coming up with a wild title first (often by drawing random words out of a hat) and then building a story around it.

Somehow this results in books that are effortless to read. That's not to say there's no thinking involved. There always is. But it's not unusual to blow through a Mellick book in one sitting. They're fast-paced with an endless number of surprises, making it tough not to keep turning pages. When the end comes, I'm left with that done-too-

soon feeling that I always love experiencing.

What I find most interesting about Mellick's writing is that there's always something substantial beneath the surface weirdness. *The Haunted Vagina* is not just about creatures living in a vagina world. It's an exploration of relationships and how far someone is willing to go for a loved one. *The Menstruating Mall* is another favorite from Mellick. On the surface it's about a shopping mall that is menstruating while a murderer stalks the shoppers trapped within the bloody walls. It's also a thoughtful examination of identities—those chosen, those created, and those earned.

Mellick's commitment to putting this sort of heart in his weird fiction has been a big influence on the bizarro genre as a whole and



can be seen in the works of many other authors. In fact, it's one of the genre's greatest strengths.

More Than Shock Value

Space Walrus by Kevin L. Donihe is about a chronically masturbating, intelligent walrus who dreams of becoming an astronaut. It's fucked up like nobody's business. It's also one of the few books that has made me cry.

On the surface, bizarro fiction is all about shock value. Gross outs abound. There are a lot of elements designed to make people uncomfortable. I won't tell you that *Ass Goblins of Auschwitz* by Cameron Pierce is not going to make you feel kind of off inside, because that would be a lie. And I'm not going to tell you that you won't feel a little awkward reading about all of the walrus spooge in *Space Walrus*.

The thing is, there's a lot more to bizarro fiction than shock value. If there wasn't, people wouldn't keep reading the stuff. Carlton Mellick III and Eraserhead Press wouldn't have a small legion of followers waiting for each quarter's releases. There wouldn't be new writers and new publishers popping up all the time.

The bottom line is that this is good writing. When you scratch the surface of *Space Walrus*, when you get past the descriptions detailing how this walrus jerks off, there's a fully realized character at the heart of the story: a walrus who just wants to be loved and just wants to go out into space where no walrus has gone before. All of this is woven together so gracefully by Donihe that the heartbreak at the end is as surprising as any of the gags along the way.

Another one of my favorites, and easily one of the funniest books I have ever read, is *HELP! A Bear Is Eating Me!* by Mykle Hansen. The entirety of the book takes place underneath a fancy SUV, where an insufferable asshole is trapped and is slowly being eaten by bears. What kept me reading—other than the constant hilariousness that Hansen manages to pull from what would seem to be a one-joke shtick—is that this asshole continues to edge his way toward some sort of redeeming quality, only to fall back into total asshole mode. I found myself as curious about whether he'd get over himself as I was about which part of him the bears would eat next.

The bar seems to be raised constantly: How can these books continue to baffle and surprise, while still providing a good story with compelling characters? I'm not going to say there isn't the occasional letdown, but even in the weaker bizarro books, there is such an abundance of weird ideas that it never seems like time wasted (especially since most of the books only take a couple hours to read).

Bizarro Controversies

No good underground movement is complete without a few solid controversies and the bizarro fiction movement is no exception, thanks in part to that surface level shock value. The most notorious controversy surrounds Mellick's debut novel, *Satan Burger*, the story of a fast food restaurant owned by the devil. In 2005, a thirty-something guy named Jared Armstrong was arrested on obscenity charges because he gave the book to a couple of teenagers and their parents freaked out. Mom and dad weren't too psyched about the cover, which shows a naked butt about to drop dookie on a clean white plate.

The description of the case as published by Findlaw is like a bizarro short story itself. It describes how Armstrong also gave the teenagers a blow-up alien and some knives, and later called one of the kid's dads a pedophile. According to Findlaw, "the part claimed to be pornographic appears to describe a nightmarish sexual encounter between a man and some sort of female alien creature who injures and kills people, or perhaps kills some other sort of man-like creature." This makes me wonder what kind of porn the kid's parents have been watching.

Thankfully, this is one of those rare instances when the artist hasn't gotten caught up in the charges. Mellick is still free to create more pornography... err, bizarro fiction. Unfortunately, Mr. Armstrong is still embroiled in legal proceedings, even though nearly ten years have passed.

A more recent controversy occurred when a forward-thinking professor at California State University Long Beach assigned his students *Baby Jesus Butt Plug*, another Mellick classic. Needless to say, Christian fundamentalist groups were outraged, crying, "Look what's being taught in college! This must stop!" Their cries went unheeded. Of course, like all controversies, the primary outcome of this and the pornography case was to draw more attention to the books.

DIY Mentality

Now is an exciting time to be a reader. Small press publishers have successfully harnessed print-on-demand (POD) technology to create books that look fantastic and fill niches that haven't been covered elsewhere in the literary scene. These presses are not only willing to take risks, they build their brands on it. The bizarro fiction movement is at the center of this action.

Most of the bizarro publishing houses are DIY efforts, spawned by writers who want to publish their own stuff and also champion other writers who are breaking new ground. The founders are typically people who got a lot of rejection letters from horror and sci-fi publishers telling them they didn't fit in, so they built their own

place to fit in and invited others to join.

These are not major publishing houses. There are no publicity departments. There are no marketing plans. These are just groups of awesome people thinking of guerilla tactics to get their books into the hands of readers who never would have guessed that such books existed. That means tabling at conventions. It means creating wild events and getting the word out, not only to avid readers, but to those people who gave up on reading because they couldn't find anything they were into. It's tough for even the staunchest non-reader to walk past a copy of *The Haunted Vagina* without at least considering it.

And out of this, a network of readers has arisen and it's constantly growing, the same way that punk grew back in the day: word of mouth. People trading books, giving copies of titles like Shatnerquake, Jeff Burk's insane William Shatner-centric bizarro hit, to friends and

saying, "You're not going to believe this even exists!"

Eraserhead Press and Beyond

Eraserhead Press in Portland is inarguably the spearhead of the bizarro movement. Eraserhead, founded in 1999 and run by Rose O'Keefe, has set the bar high for the genre. The press puts out three or four books every quarter, one of which is usually a Mellick book. But that's only the main line. Eraserhead has expanded into various imprints, including Lazy Fascist Press, which bridges the gap between bizarro and alt lit, and Deadite, which is focused on extreme horror, but occasionally dips into splatter-heavy bizarro.

Eraserhead has earned the trust of readers who will check out a book just because it has the Eraserhead name on it by putting out consistently high-quality books. There's a rabid group of readers ready and waiting each season's new releases. Few publishers can

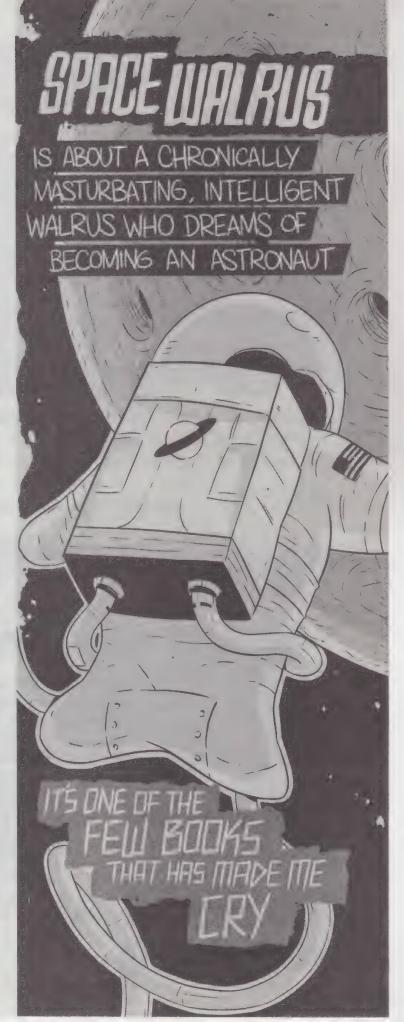
make such a claim.

Over the last couple of years, the pool of readers interested in bizarro has increased, as has the pool of writers who label themselves as bizarro. The DIY mentality has led to the birth of a bunch of new bizarro publishers. The result is more healthy competition in the field, and, of course, more crazy books to choose from. There are many

publishers beyond Eraserhead worth exploring.

One of the newest is StrangeHouse Books, run by Kevin Strange, creator of gory low-budget films turned writer. StrangeHouse is noteworthy because of the effort made to create a very specific voice within the bizarro genre. The goal is not to mimic Eraserhead, but to complement what that press is doing. StrangeHouse is where you're most likely to find the ultra-gross bizarro, the bizarro that leans a bit closer to the horror and splatterpunk genres. Strange himself is the author of a good chunk of the StrangeHouse bibliography, with books like *Robamapocalypse*, about a giant robot Barrack Obama who smashes other robots in the arena of battle.

Another new publisher, Bizarro Pulp Press, takes a more scattered approach, putting out titles that range from *Fecal Terror* by David Bernstein, which features an angry turd on the cover, to Rob Harris's more high-minded *All Art Is Junk*.





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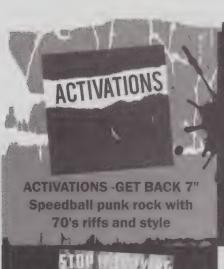
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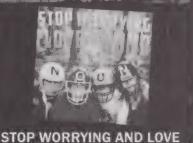
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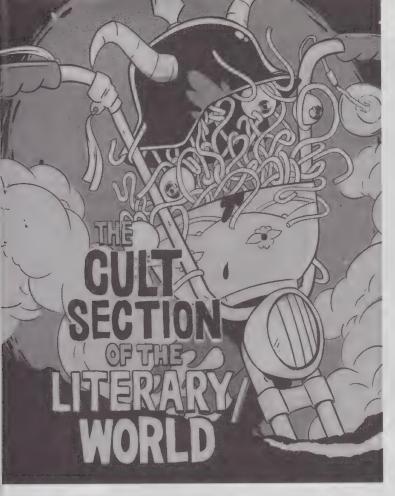


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manic noise, punk rock



HOLLYWOOD - LOVE CHILD CD/LP Baltimore hook laden, fuzzed out punk



Other bizarro publishers include Rooster Republic Press, Legumeman Books, ATLATL Press, Grindhouse Press, Dynatox Ministries, and Civil Coping Mechanisms. Raw Dog Screaming Press, one of the originators, is still putting out great books, too.

No Readings!

Author readings are often groan-worthy events. There is this peculiar whisper-like monotone voice that has been fostered on college campuses by writers when they read their stories live, as if the objective is to put the audience to sleep. The end result is that most people do not attend author readings for fear of being bored to death. For that reason, when bizarro authors do events, they tend to label them parties, performances, shows... anything but readings.

The first time I attended a bizarro reading, I got spaghetti thrown at me. I'm not saying that I like having spaghetti thrown at me, but I do like surprises. And when I expect an author to flip open his book and he instead starts a spaghetti fight with the crowd, I'm pretty fucking surprised. That was Shane McKenzie, and it was less a reading and more a performance in promotion of his book, All You Can Eat.

A lot of bizarro authors come from a punk rock background, and it shows in the energy they bring to readings. While the traditional reading is distant, the bizarro performance is engaging and hilarious. There is yelling. There are wild gestures. Visual aids are not uncommon. Things may get thrown. There might be fire. People are going to leave saying that they never thought a reading could ever be like that.

Bizarro Is a Community

BizarroCon, the official convention of bizarro fiction, takes place every fall just outside of Portland in what I suspect is one of the strangest hotels in the country: Edgefield. It's mazelike and filled with paintings of fucked up leprechauns and such. I first attended the

convention a couple years ago and it had a pretty major impact on my life. I know that sounds dramatic, but it's true.

Writing is a solitary endeavor. Some of my earliest memories are of me sitting alone in my bedroom at my childhood home, sprawled out on the yellow carpet, writing stories about puking furballs zapping back and forth through interdimensional portals and fighting dinosaurs. I showed these stories to my parents and they smiled and nodded. Rejection. I shared them with my friends and they pretty much did the same. Rejection. I brought them to my creative writing classes at college and my classmates freaked out. Rejection. I sent them to publishers and they said, "It's not right for us." Rejection. Rejection. Rejection.

All of the rejection takes a toll when you're a writer, because it's targeted at you and you alone. I've got nobody else to blame and nobody to turn to for support. Sure, I've befriended a precious few other writers over the years. I'm in a writing group that I share my stories with and talk writing with. I consider that group sacred. But their stuff isn't quite as weird as mine.

There's no rejection at BizarroCon. Everyone there writes or reads weird shit. I discovered a shared passion not only for writing, but for furthering this absurd type of art. Yeah, like any convention, there's a lot of partying and goofing around, but the undercurrent is this: How can we all make our writing better and how can we spread the word that this writing is fun and worth paying attention to? How can we get the message out to readers that *Harry Potter* and *Twilight* are not the only options, and that there's stuff like *Journey to Abortosphere* by Kirk Jones and *TV Snorted My Brain* by Bradley Sands?

To me, this is what a legit scene is about. It's what bizarro has been about since day one. The bizarro genre began with a bunch of gnarly writers who knew each other, inspired each other, and worked together. Over the years, the group has grown. Now there are more writers from all over the world, but there's still a lot of working together, sharing of ideas, and essentially furthering the bizarro genre.

Every year, the bizarro regulars show up at BizarroCon. There's a bunch of newcomers too, not just writers, but readers and supporters. They're greeted with open arms: "Oh hey, you write weird shit? That's awesome, I write weird shit too!" I never got that at any creative writing course or workshop I've attended.

BizarroCon refueled my lifelong passion for writing weird shit. I bought a big stack of books. I met rad people. I went home and read and wrote with renewed fervor. I was psyched to become part of this community that is open to everyone.

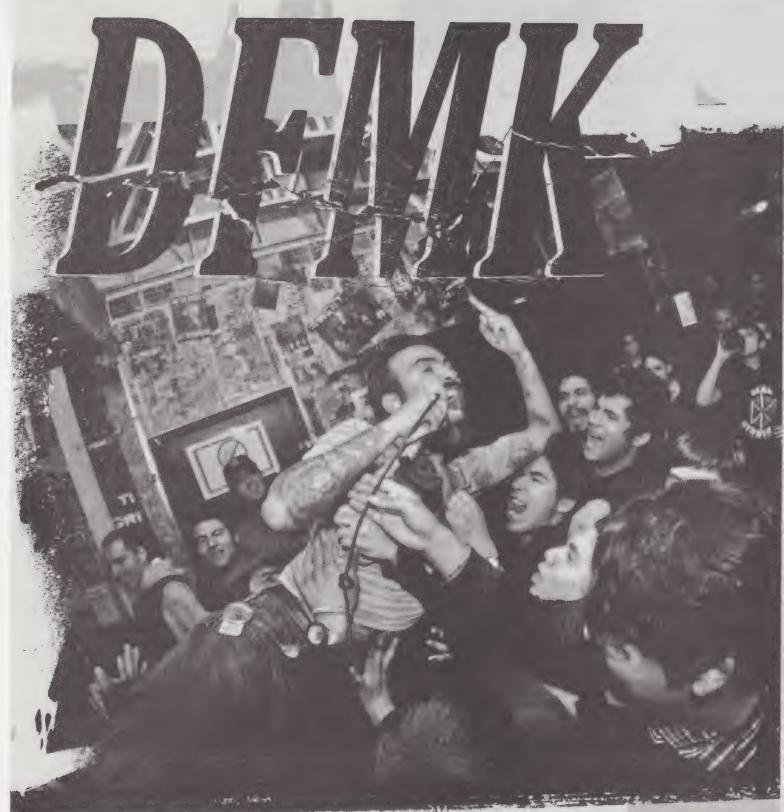
Suggested Reading

Bizarro is a new genre. There's not much agreement about what the defining books are (other than that at least one of them is by Carlton Mellick III). That's not the list I'm putting together here. This is a list of some of the bizarro books, new and old, that I've enjoyed the most and that I think are good starting points.

The Best Bizarro Fiction of the Decade—Edited by Cameron Pierce (Eraserhead)
Punk Land—Carlton Mellick III (Eraserhead)
HELP! A Bear Is Eating Me!—Mykle Hansen (Eraserhead)
Space Walrus—Kevin Donihe (Eraserhead)
Party Lords—Justin Grimbol (Grindhouse)
You Are Sloth—Steve Lowe (Eraserhead)
They Had Goat Heads—D. Harlan Wilson (ATLATL)
Strange Fucking Stories—Edited by Sean Ferrari (StrangeHouse)
Cripple Wolf—Jeff Burk (Eraserhead)
We Live inside You—Jeremy Robert Johnson (Swallowdown)

MP Johnson's short stories have appeared in more than thirty-five publications. His debut book, The After-Life Story of Pork Knuckles Malone, was released in 2013 by Bizarro Pulp Press. His second book, Dungeons & Drag Queens, is out now from Eraserhead Press. He is the creator of Freak Tension zine, a B-movie extra, and an obsessive music fan currently based in Minneapolis. Learn more at www.freaktension.com.

RAZDRICAKE 37



I'm a pretty negative/pessimistic person.
I've got that NMA.

Mr. Cap: Vocals El Boti: Guitar Marco: Bass

Angel: Guitar Alex: Drums



DFMK remains the best thing to happen to the Tijuana

punk scene for a good while. Negativity seems to be their constant theme, but you wouldn't believe it at one of their live shows. The faithful and uninitiated convene for a mutual release brought by a pummeling rhythm section bound by blood, a yin and yang slacker-slash-madman dual guitar attack, and something out of a '60s time warp manning the helm. They provided the shot in the arm their city needed, without the expected, eventual withdrawal. If that weren't enough, they've gone a step further and taken it upon themselves to show Tijuana punk to the rest of their country, traveling Mexico's highways one dangerous summer at a time. And they've done all of this without an official release, relying solely on burned CD-Rs, word of mouth, and the internet.

Overcoming adversity in one's life through music is not a new theme but it remains a timeless one and a unifying force. Though this band is comprised of such different individuals, they're brought together in their communal reaching out for iust a touch of that rock'n'roll essence that keeps us all going. -Rene Navarro

Interview by Rene Navarro and Daryl Gussin | Transcription by Janeth Galaviz and Rene Photography by Victor Sanchez | Layout By Daryl

Rene: We're missing Angel, who plays guitar. We should take advantage of this. Since Angel isn't here, why don't you guys describe Angel to us? What's your guys' guitar player like?

Cap: Well, he's really easy to describe. A very crazy kid... very—not confused—but very crazy... kid. [laughs]

Boti: Yeah... he's the crazy one.

Marco: He's one of my best pals. He and I actually started the band so... I guess he's pretty important for the band but he's not here.

Rene: Okay, speaking of starting a band, it says on your Bandcamp bio that you guys started your band in a drunken stupor of intoxication. Is that true? And what does DFMK actually mean?

Marco: Okay, well, about the first question, we made it up while intoxicated. Those were pretty dark times for Angel and for me. We were doing a lot of drugs and that was when we started the band. We smoked a lot of pot and that's how the name came up, like, "Oh yeah, let's call it whatever. DFMK." We make up stupid names from that.

Daryl: Such as?

Marco: The last one we made was "Don't Fuck My Kids." [laughs]

Cap: Regarding all the pedophile priests.

Marco: The first one was one of the pretty important ones. "Diario Fumamos Mota Karnal," which means "We smoke weed everyday, bro.'

Cap: Actually, it's not an acronym, they're just letters. It doesn't mean anything in particular. We've always said that the band is about nothing.

Daryl: What do you mean by that?

Cap: Like our lyrics, they don't represent a certain genre. They're just self-destructing lyrics about reality, life, and our own personal, internal demons. I don't know; it's pretty hard to explain.

Marco: I guess what it means is-we're not trying to say anything to you, like "do this" or "do that." We are just talking about us and whatever we do-about nothing.

Alex: We don't have any positive minds, you know what I mean? We're not positive. We like to keep it negative.

Cap: Well, myself, I'm a pretty negative/ pessimistic person. I always try to see the negative things first, because when good things happen to me, I like to get surprised That's kind of my nature I guess. I've got that NMA (Negative Mental Attitude).

Daryl: Why do you think that is?

Cap: I think the way I was raised, I don't know. It's like that Offspring song, "Baby, I just got no self-esteem" [laughs]. Since I was a little kid, I remember watching Peanuts cartoons on the TV and relating to all the characters, 'specially Charlie Brown. 'Cause when I was really young, I couldn't relate a lot with family or friends. I sometimes preferred playing alone. Nobody would get me.

Daryl: What is Charlie Brown saying on your Charlie Brown tattoo?

Cap: "Good grief." Basically that's how I feel when nobody gets me. It's like that old "Charlie Brown" song from the Coasters: "Why is everybody always picking on me." I

love that song. [laughs]

Rene: Speaking of quote un-quote "getting you," compared to most punk singers you're quite a front man, which is something we don't see that much anymore. Where, specifically, would your influences as a front man—as a performer of sorts—come from? I know we have James Brown high on the list. On EPs and stuff that you guys have released, we have images such as Little Richard, Stevie Wonder, Roy Orbison...

Daryl: Chuck Berry.

Cap: At least for me, personally, Elvis is always going to be the King. However, I really admire and love '60s soul singers like James Brown, Otis Redding, and Sam Cooke.

Daryl: What about in terms of hardcore punk?

RAZORCAKE 39

It was pretty dangerous, I guess. The first tour we did, we didn't know anyone, anything from anything.



Cap: Well, I can relate with Darby Crash a little bit because of the rawness of his aura. But one of my major influences in stage performing is Guy Picciotto from Fugazi. He is an incredible performer. I love him.

Rene: Would you guys like to elaborate on how this whole thing came together?

Marco: I started the band with Angel and we actually played powerviolence before, like stoner powerviolence. We were trying to do that shit, but everybody in that band quit, because it was just drinking and shit. I asked my brother to join because he was in the next room and he all ready knew how to play the drums. But when we first invited Cap, we tried to play punk rock, or at least capture more of that rock'n'roll essence, and Alex just fit in with that right away.

Alex: Before me was another guitar player but he never went to jam. I saw that they needed some help, so I just went and drank a lot of beer, smoked some weed, started playing some punk rock, and it was cool.

Rene: Had you guys ever played together before, or were those your first times jamming?

Alex: Yes, but mostly just jamming. It was nothing serious back then, just playing punk rock covers, like 2 Minutos and that.

Rene: [to Marco and Alex] Do you feel that you guys being in a band together has brought you closer as brothers in a way that maybe not being in a band together wouldn't?

Cap: [laughs] Negative.

Marco: No, that's a negative, but it's something really personal. We're brothers, especially when we have discussions, like

when somebody says "Don't play the drums like that," or we just disagree on something, as brothers do. Family stuff.

Rene: So for you guys, is it ever annoying in the band when they fight and you have to put up with it?

Boti: Actually, on tour we all got along very well, until the last tour when these two brothers almost duked it out, but that only happened that time. Usually, they don't fight each other.

Rene: This one's for Boti. You're a guitar player in this band and you play a very integral part in the band's sound. You left for a while before coming back. Would you care to walk us through that?

Boti: It was a sad time, personal stuff. I don't want to cry, man. A part of me wanted to mature, to actually get a job, get married,



all that grown up stuff, but eventually that failed. So the band brought me back to do the tour, and I decided just to stay. Basically, it was just that.

Rene: [laughs] So you're saying that you went back to DFMK because your private life failed? So you guys are like an ex-girlfriend who always takes you back?

Cap: Actually, this guy came back at a really good time because now I have a visa passport and now he is the lead guitarist, and he came for a good reason.

Rene: It definitely wasn't the same without him.

Daryl: What was the first thing that you wanted to do when you got your visa back?

Cap: [laughs] Go to Jack In The Box and get a hamburger! We don't have Jack In The Box here. We ain't got Jack, man.

Rene: We have everything else man! We

got Burger King, McDonald's. Our Carl's Jr. is better. We got no In-N-Out and no Jack In The Box.

Cap: So, yeah. The first thing I did—ate at Jack In The Box—then I went to see OFF! at the Casbah, and was like "All right!" and then after the show, I went back to Jack In The Box.

Rene: People here in TJ know. They see you with a bag of In-N-Out and they'll be like, "Oh bro!" Dude, I had a buddy I trained with who got deported and would always beg me to bring him a Slurpee. I was like, "Dude, my hand gets cold."

Daryl: So tell us how you lost your visa.

Cap: It was in June 2005. I bought a Bad Religion ticket for the House Of Blues, and I remember the first song they played was "21st Century (Digital Boy)," which usually was the last song of their shows. So once I heard it, I started to run into the front,

bopping, bopping with the good music. At the end of the song, I noticed that my wallet, with my visa in it, was gone.

Rene: Did you consider staying in the country for a while?

Cap: No, I had to work on Monday. Rene: Are you still a Bad Religion fan?

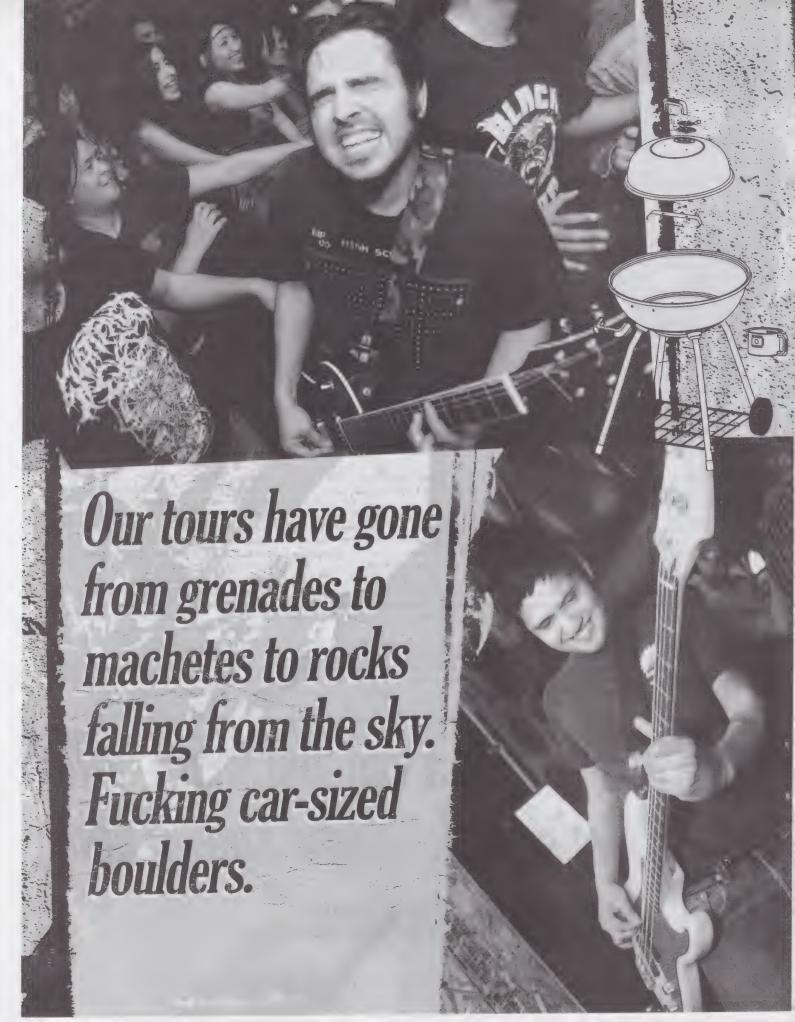
Cap: Yes, but not a HOB fan. Rene: The House Of Rules.

Cap: Because at the end, just imagine it, staying there for at least twelve or thirteen more songs, I was kind of enjoying it, but at the same time not, and I didn't have any money. I found a friend there who let me borrow two bucks.

Daryl: For people who don't know about crossing the border, what does it take to get a visa, just to casually cross the border?

Cap: Right now there's a good thing because a lot of people that are working, making

We just bought a van and went, "All right, let's book some shows and we'll see what happens."



minimum wage—if you've been working for the same company for at least two years and don't have a bad record in the USA, it's not hard to get it—people are getting approved pretty fast. In my case I was kind of lucky, because I lost it almost nine years ago, so it wasn't too hard since I've been working for three years in the company where I am now. Rene: Outside of DFMK, what do you guys do regularly? Are you guys students,

workers? What's going on around here?

Marco: I just finished college. I studied philosophy and, right now, I'm working in a

high school.

Boti: I work as a programmer over there in the U.S. I used to work for Motorola, but now I think that company just went down. Another company bought us, a German company, so, yeah, it's like a high-security job.

Rene: You can't talk about it. Boti: Nope, it's confidential.

Alex: I'm studying optometry and, at the same time, I work for an independent optometrist.

Cap: I've worked in customer service for the

past fifteen to twenty years.

Rene: Is that why your English is so good? Cap: No, that's because I watched a lot of television. That's why.

Rene: What's Angel do for a living? Everybody: Nothing! [laughter]

Daryl: For people reading this around the world, how would you describe Tijuana?

Cap: A little, dirty city with nice people. A lot of people that live here, they go to the USA, work in the USA, or at least they can cross. And people who have been living here for years, they know the culture (American culture) and it's kind of different in Tijuana, from other states or cities further down south in Mexico. It's a dirty, little city with a lot of rock'n'roll and sex industry.

Boti: There's not much to do in Tijuana besides going to bars, crossing the border. We don't have anything like a zoo, big parks.

We don't have anything, just bars.

Cap: But still there is a lot culture. You can see it now in the streets, in the cuisine, in the people. It's cool. Tijuana is very weird.

Daryl: Are you all from here? Cap, Marco, and Alex: Yes.

Boti: I was born in Chula Vista, but I've been here all my life.

Rene: What's it like to cross the border everyday to work?

Boti: It's painful sometimes.
Rene: Do you walk or drive?

Boti: I drive. I live in Playas de Tijuana, which is close to the border, but my work is in Del Mar. It takes an hour to get there after crossing the border.

Rene: What time do you leave your house and what time do you get to work?

Boti: I have to be at work at nine-thirty AM, but I always arrive like eleven AM [laughs]. I guess I'm a slacker. That's why I came back to DFMK. I have the Sentri Pass. It's like a fast pass to cross the border. It usually only takes me twenty minutes to cross instead of an hour or two, even three, if you don't have the pass.

Rene: Speaking of the Sentri Pass, I don't have one. I have a Ready Lane Pass. We are now at a point where entering the U.S. provides a socio-economic niche. You can't have a Sentri Pass if you don't have A.) a car, B.) money to apply, and C.) a steady job. You can't get the Ready Lane unless you invest in getting a more expensive visa pass, and then you have the general public admission. Do you guys think it's kind of weird how in the last few years the border itself has become a classifier of socio-economic niches? You stand in line for three hours watching the rich kids roll up in their Jettas, wait in line two minutes, and cross in front of you. Does that create friction at the border?

Boti: Crossing the border is always awkward. It's pretty hard because there are a lot of social differences. There are also people who live in TJ, who are American citizens and cross regularly, or just people who are crossing to shop or do something else. I don't think that having a Sentri Pass is that much like a social or money thing, because anybody can have a Sentri as long as you don't have a criminal record or some bullshit like that. For the Sentri right now, it's like \$150. But, yeah, anybody can apply for a Sentri, and have one. Especially now, they are approving people really easy. I know a lot a people who didn't have one and just got it.

Cap: That's what I was talking about—that a lot people are given tourist visas, not to work there, just to cross and spend their money in the U.S., so its kind of easier to have one now, than five or seven years ago. Five years ago, you'd have been working or having a job for two years and you'd have to bring in lots of papers about you and shit. For me this time they only asked me why I didn't have my visa for all this time, and I just told them that I didn't need it in that time. Right now I only need it just to go to shows, shopping, or eating Jack In The Box. That was it.

Rene: There is a lot different chemistry on stage when you guys play. There is, of course, Angel's insanity. You guys have the slacker guitar player, the rhythm section brothers, we got the crazy frontman from a '60s time warp. You are so different but when you come together—even with so many differences between you and your personalities, even in the age gap. I mean all you guys are more or less one age and Cap is a different age. How much older than these guys are you, Cap?

Cap: Okay, I was born in the best freaking year. Fucking 1977. I was born when the King died and punk rock just came about. I'm thirty-six and I'm going to be thirty-seven in October.

Rene: At thirty-six, how many punks your age are at an average show? How do you feel to be one of the true believers after all these years? What do you think it is that forces people to fall out post-thirty? Daryl: Or even think about the difference between how many people were older at the OFF! show rather than how many people still go to smaller, underground shows.

Cap: It's a big difference. For me, going to shows it's like, "Hey, I'm not married. I don't

have a girlfriend." Which sometimes I wish I did have [laughs] but the thing is sometimes at, like, an OFF! show, you can see older people enjoying that stuff that they've enjoyed for many years. But right now I understand that they're married, they have jobs and things to do, and for local shows, punks shows, it's pretty hard for them to go and support new bands. For me, it's different because I don't have that ball and chain. I really like going to shows to see obscure bands, but other people about my age, they have something else to do. I guess they grew up. I don't know. It's pretty weird. Well, Boti here is in his thirties as well.

Boti: Thirty-four.

Cap: But he looks twenty-one. [laughs]

Boti: I guess I have good genes. But, yes, sometimes it gets depressing because you are in this scene and the people that you knew aren't around anymore. It's cool to meet new people or whatever, but it was nice to have all your friends around. When they're not there, you kind of doubt yourself sometimes. "Why am I still here?" That was one of the reasons I quit the band, but, in the end, it doesn't matter. It's the same bullshit. You do it because you want to do it. It's fun.

Daryl: It seems like twice you guys have gone on tour during the summer, and both times called the tour Verano Peligroso. Is this

a reference to Alejandra Guzman?

Marco: It is.

Daryl: And you've embraced this song as an anthem of summer touring?

Cap: Not exactly.

Daryl: Explain why you chose to name your tours after it.

Cap: Well, basically, the thing is—we are kind of crazy sometimes. We like our alcohol and our wacky tobaccy, so I just came up with the name Verano Peligroso. Like the Alejandra Guzman movie of the same name, but not the song, because I don't like the song. I have always tried to avoid typical Mexican pop music. When I was younger, I embraced American music a lot. Oldies music, like '60s music.

Daryl: What about the movie?

Cap: [jokingly] I've never seen it. [laughs]
Boti: It was pretty dangerous, I guess. The
first tour we did, we didn't know anyone,
anything from anything. We just bought a
van and went, "All right, let's books some
shows and we'll see what happens."

Daryl: Did you go all the way down to Mexico City?

Boti: Yeah, we actually got robbed in Mexico City. At gunpoint.

Cap: We got mugged twenty feet from the show. I was in the van. We had just finished playing. We were taking all of our equipment to the van. I was inside changing my fucking sweaty shirt, when suddenly somebody came with a gun and he started demanding our money, wallets, and cell phones or he would kill us. But with a really "chilango" (Mexico City) accent [laughter], so once I heard the commotion, I got out of the van and the guy pointed the fucking gun at me. Then he went to Angel, and right

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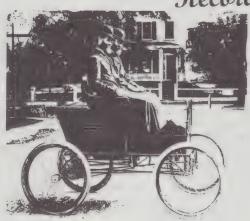
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Cap: I've worked in customer service for the past fifteen to twenty years.



Rene: Is that why your English is so good?

away Angel gave him his wallet and cell phone. It was a really weird experience.

Rene: [laughs] So you're saying the only guy who isn't here was the first one to give up his wallet?

All: [laughs] Yes!

Daryl: Did guys go back the next summer? Cap: Yes, we went back the next summer, which was last year. Actually, after the show, we went to the same fucking neighborhood, Colonia Doctores . At about six AM we went to sleep in an apartment, which was right in front from where we got robbed, and that fucking neighborhood is really fucking crazy. You can get mugged at any hour.

Boti: Yeah, but to put it shortly, our tours have gone from grenades to machetes to rocks falling from the sky. Fucking carsized boulders.

Daryl: Tell us a little more about the grenades and machetes.

Boti: This last tour we were arriving in Tampico when we got stuck in traffic on this bridge, and suddenly heard machine guns, and we were like, "Are those machine guns!?" We got out of the car. Angel and Juan Carlos (Calafia Puta), they started skating on the bridge because we were stuck there for over an hour.

But at some point everybody got out of their cars and a lot of people just started running from their cars, so these guys got on their skateboards and went down to see what was happening. When they come back, they told us that there was some guy with a grenade and the military had tanks. All these guys started arriving at the bridge and blocking the roads. So yeah, it was a big mess, but we got out of there safe, so it's cool.

Daryl: Do you guy want to talk about the van that you are touring in?

Marco: Yes, it has a name. She's Vanesa, like Van-esa. The first tour we had a cow skull and we put it on the front. Every military officer at the check points was all over us. While we were in Tequila, Jalisco some guy who was with us bought it. It was pretty rock'n'roll, I guess.

Cap: Every military stop we would get to, we'd get pulled over. It was also because Rene from Fuerza Booking put a badly drawn fucking inverted cross on the side. [laughs] Rene: Badly drawn and badly thought out. "Oh, you're touring through Mexico? An

inverted cross should help.'

Cap: In Cruces, Durango!

Rene: Ooooh, that's no bueno. Did you guys ever catch any heat from the locals?

Cap: Last year, in San Carlos, Sonora, we were at the beach. Marco was on acid. Juan Carlos from Calafia Puta was on acid as well. We had a lot beers. We were camping on the beach, smoking weed, and drinking. Hey, we posed for a fucking photograph with "manginas" [raucous, uncontrolled laughter], naked. The photo is on Facebook and Angel was like masturbating.

Rene: What the fuck!?!

Daryl: So the locals...they didn't

appreciate this?

Cap: No. no. That wasn't the problem. First of all, it was Sunday and we just played Hermosillo, Sonora the previous night. Keep in mind this was the third day of the tour and we decided to go to a very relaxing beach in San Carlos Sonora, south of Guaymas. The thing was that it was late into the night, maybe, like two AM, and we're already pissed drunk at that moment. There was just a group of four or five us talking about shit. The rest of the guys were scattered around the beach area. So, the thing I remember is that there were other BAZDACAKE 43

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Cap: No, that's because I watched a lot of television. That's why.

people inside their cars parked like twenty feet away. In some moment it seems that there were some words exchanged between one of our group and a person from one of the cars parked, but I really did not think too much of it. It was like, "Okay... whatever."

After about twenty minutes, two cars came out in front of us with headlights on our direction. We were sitting down in the sand and suddenly six guys come out from both cars. Two guys with machetes, others with a screwdriver and X-Acto knives. One guy put an X-Acto knife to my back. At the moment I didn't know what was happening. One of us stood up and started to confront them, when—BOOM!—he was fucking kicked in the chest and dropped to the sand. They went to him with a fucking big machete, "mal pedo" (fucked up).

I was totally shocked. I really was not able to relate what was going on. It was really scary. After two minutes of mass confusion, they just said, "Okay, get the fuck out of here," so we did. We picked up our shit and headed to a different beach to camp out. We headed down on Monday morning to Sinaloa in search of the next adventure, I guess.

Rene: Can you put that into context for people who might not understand how a

group of individuals can walk up to you in this country and literally tell you, "You have to leave or we will forcefully do things to you"? Can you explain what it's like to live in a country where you can't really call the cops?

Cap: It's basically an understanding that, "Okay, no shit. We've got to go," because you can't go to the cops. The locals know the cops so you can't fuck with them.

Boti: On the first tour we went to a beach and it was weird because the cops were charging you just to be there. For example, if you wanted to drink on the street, in your car, they would ask you for some money, like twenty dollars. You are afraid of people with machetes—and the cops, too. In Mexico you are on your own.

Cap: Mexico is not safe like the United States is not safe. You need to know where to go and meet up with people that know the situation. I think that's around the world, that's universal. There are dangerous cities or neighborhoods in the United States just like over here there are neighborhoods you can't go to. Even me as a local, I can't go certain places by myself.

Rene: I only have one more question, the last question. The song "Cruce De Caminos,"

I've always understood that song to be about not being able to control yourself, about addiction, about hitting low points. And I was informed that's not really what the song's about, so who wrote that song? What would you say the song is about?

Marco: I guess you can get a lot of ideas from those lyrics, but it's basically about death. The chorus "Siento que no puedo parar" that means that I can't ever stop, and that it will take me to an inevitable ending. You can have lots of interpretations. There is a passage that says, "A los infiernos voy a caminar" (I'm going to walk through the hells) that basically means push your life to your lowest limits and then come back from it. Yeah, I wrote it after my dog died. It was a really tragic death so I was kind of depressed when I wrote that song.

Cap: At least for me, it's telling people that we're not going to stop for nobody. I'm just going to live my life, walk the line, my line. I won't stop. That's my feeling with that song. I want to live every second, every moment to the fullest. Of course, yes!



HARD GIBLS

San Jose is a mixed-up place. The city's one hundred and eight squares miles partially contains Silicon Valley, location of some of the wealthiest tech companies on the planet: eBay, IBM, Facebook, Netflix, Google. Young people and creative types here in San Jose are unwilling to be homogenized by the economy of their hometown much like any buzzing city on the outskirts. These suburbanites smoke pot, shirk suits and ties, go to shows, and form bands. Their rebellion is equal parts internal and external. Some may even end up working for one of those tech giants. Yet they can never shake that itch of wanting something beyond cloud computing.

Reacting to the tedium, Hard Girls scratch every crevice raw. They program their own code of ethics through DIY punk, bridging the gap between tech-savviness and Luddite cautiousness. It's low and highbrow. From Damon Wayne to Werner Herzog and fine wine to Bud Light Lime, this trio data-mines value from anything. A dick joke is granted equal weight as name-dropping poet John Berryman. My Little Pony precedes Russian novelist Solzhenitsyn. Yet the wet sense of humor and devotion to sarcasm deflects any pretentiousness. Think The Weakerthans filtered through The Dead Milkmen.

Hard Girls go to a mixed-up place where nothing is off limits, nothing is stupid, and everything can be valuable.



If I don't do it, I get really depressed and I can't function. Well, can function. Fcan piss.

Sean: How much rapping do you guys do? Mike: I play guitar in Bob Vielma's (bassist for Shinobu) high school rap group, The Rap\$callionz. I was asked to play a guitar solo on one song, then rapped on two or three. After that group broke up, it just became two or three friends doing whatever. I did a couple songs with them in the next group.

Morgan: That group was called The Chillin'

Dogs. [laughter]

Sean: Why so many separate rap groups?

Mike: There are so many good names out there and you have to use them before somebody else. And it keeps the motion going. You don't have the pressure of being a real band. You just put something out there and not be committed to it.

That's the tradition of the Phat'n'Phunky (Bob's label) crew. We just have a bunch of fake bands.

Mike: You talk about it and come up with a concept and write two songs and there you go. Max: You make two songs and then you're

Sean: How many fake bands are there?

Max: Probably thirty. Mike: Dagger.

Morgan: The pirate punk band.

Mike: The Satans.

Max: Our anarchist punk band. Mike: Just me and Max.

Max: Meaning we're twelve years old...

Morgan: ...in character.

Mike: The main single was called "Anarchy World.'

Max: Side B is "Nazi Landlord."

Todd: So your parents?

Max: That was the concept. [laughter]

Morgan: We had a hardcore band called Dead Meat.

Max: We had a porno grind band that didn't work out.

Sean: Can you define that?

Max: I'd rather not talk about that part of my past. It was a dark time.

Sean: Mike, you said some things a while back about the TV show Silicon Valley, the area it represents and about being from San Jose. A lot of people think that San Jose and Silicon Valley are the same thing.

Mike: It happens everywhere, basically. There's something that's the most famous export from an area and everything gets distilled down to that. Even when there's a lot of interesting stuff happening in between where the money happens. San Jose is coming back up as far as arts and things to do and people being involved. I've struggled with it a lot, but I'm coming to terms with San Jose right now. I want to like the show because I like Mike Judge, but I can't bring myself to watch it. It's literally too close to home. I just worry that it's a presentation of the area that's one-sided.

Max: Very narrow.

Todd: We're adjacent to this place called "Hollywood" You may have heard of it?

Max: Really? I've heard "Tinseltown."

Mike: I've heard of the San Fernando porn district, but not "Hollywood."

Sean: "We visited today with our porno grind

band. Doing research, actually."

Mike: Getting field recordings. [laughter] I worry when people equate an area to its main economic representation.

Morgan: You can do computer stuff anywhere. It's the internet—literally anywhere. You can make a movie anywhere. Todd: That's science fiction, man.

Max: I'm not familiar with Los Angeles County and the cultures...

Todd: It's just one group of people.

Max: There's Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie.

Mike: And their kids.

Max: Their kids are the ones who go to the

Mike: But there's a remaining counterculture aspect still rather than just being all about apps.

Todd: I love appetizers, man.

Max: "I'll take the bacon-fried asparagus app."

Morgan: You should try ordering at a restaurant and going, "What sort of apps do you have?"

Sean: Morgan, are you still a school bus driver? Morgan: Yeah. It's not too bad.

Max: "I throw balls at them as soon as they board."

Todd: What's the most surprising thing about that job?

Max: Children vomiting all the time.



"You're a very obnoxious young boy. I'm older than you and I'm smarter than you.

Morgan: There's puke on the bus a couple of times a year. You can't avoid that.

Sean: Only a couple of times a year?

Morgan: It depends. I'm not at school district level. I do private schools, mostly. I thought the younger kids would be easier, but the worst are kindergartners. The reason they're so bad is because they can't...

Max: They can't think. [laughter]

Morgan: Well, a lot of schools start them too young. Some schools at four-and-a-half. You're too small to be in kindergarten. Let's be honest, you're too small to not be taking a nap. You tell them to be quiet and ten seconds later they don't even remember that you told them to be quiet.

Sean: It's like driving a fish bowl, essentially. Max: I'm going to brag for Morgan, but he's

also an Eagle Scout.

Morgan: One time, me and Bob, who's also an Eagle Scout, wanted to start an all-Eagle Scout band.

Sean: What was this group going to be

called? The Eagles?

Mike: Where Eagle Scouts Dare. [laughter] Morgan: We'd be the best band in the wilderness.

Mike: Well, at least the most wellprepared band.

Max: You could start a show with some flint.

Sean: What do you do, Max?

Max: I work at Whole Foods. I'm the wine

buyer there.

Todd: I can tell by what you're drinking.

Mike: He's a connoisseur of Bud Light Lime. Max: I try to keep it discreet, man. I like to have a refreshing beverage every once in a while before I have a fine Chianti.

Todd: "It's got notes of laundry."

Morgan: "There's a lot of Tide on the nose."

Sean: Was there a lot of training?

Max: I'm actually going for my level one sommelier certification.

Sean: [whispers] What does that mean? Max: Sommelier is certified through a...

Mike: A governing body.

Max: Some master sommeliers can open up a bottle of wine, put it on a table, and smell it from there. I have some certification. I do know about wine.

Todd: "I drink."

Max: I picked things up and I do have a mild interest. I don't care about it as much as a lot of other things.

Todd: I think that's healthy.

Max: They are letting me leave for three months for tour and still keep my position and pay. I hope no one at Whole Foods working at my store hears this-but I fucking hate my job. [laughter]

Sean: You started pretty strong. Morgan: It sounded really positive.

Max: [mock angrily] I hate the people I work with. They're all pigs! I think wine is interesting, but it's also super bougie and the culture around it, too.

Morgan: Also, he works at the store in the wealthiest part of the Bay Area (Los Altos). Max: In the United States, it's one of the

wealthiest areas.

Sean: What's the shittiest thing that's

happened to you with a customer?

Max: When I first started there I was a barista. And this lady came up to me and said, "Excuse me, can you grind this for me?" I tell her that there's a grinder where the bulk coffee is. She says, "I know." I tell her that I can see that it's not in use. She says, "I want you to do it for me. I know how to use it, but I want you to do it for me." I started telling her how to use it step by step. I felt like an asshole, but she was being a horrible person. Then she said, "You're a very obnoxious young boy. I'm older than you and I'm smarter than you. What are you even doing with your life? You're not even doing anything?" [laughter]

Morgan: "I was working until you started

talking to me."

Todd: So, you're like a rental servant?

Max: Exactly. I've worked there three years and it's the first customer service job I've ever had. I'm not used to it. People walk up to you and go, "Peanut butter." I'm like, "What about it? What do you need to know?" And if someone doesn't say, "Excuse me," I just ignore them.

Morgan: I really don't like that, too. I used to work at a hardware store and people wouldn't say, "Excuse me" or "Hi." It's just rude. "Nails! Where are the nails?" On the sign over there! There are buckets of nails.

[laughter]

Max: [pauses] So, that's what I don't like about my job. [drums on his beer can] People are like, "You used to have this brand. I don't know what the brand is. I don't know what the packaging looks like. I don't even know what product it was. Do you know where I can find it?" It's the worst guessing game.

Todd: You've taken the place of video clerks from the '80s and '90s.

Max: "I saw this movie. It had an actor that's famous."

Mike: "But not that famous, though."

Sean: "You wouldn't recognize him." Mike: "I'm much smarter than you. You wouldn't know this movie." [laughter]

Sean: Mike, what do you do? Let's pillage your work.

Mike: Yeah, let's tear it apart. I work for a photography company in San Francisco that does youth sports photography and school pictures. [Max pretends to sneeze while opening a beer can] Smooth.

Morgan: Mom definitely didn't hear that. Mike: It's an old sommelier's trick.

Morgan: Sneeze when you pop the cork. It enhances the flavor.

Mike: My job is fine. I like the people. They do the yearbook photos for schools and packages, like the baseball and soccer photos. I used to do customer service, but now I'm managing the school accounts. I feel like when I'm there I'm kind of wearing a mask the whole time, like I'm trying to appear to be the most normal version of myself. It's kind of draining. So, it's

nice that we're doing this. Max: This is a nice break. I talk to millionaires everyday. I'm not trying to brag!

Mike: Yeah, I'm a millionaire.

Max: I'm not a millionaire, but I know many. Morgan: They just ask me to get stuff for them! It's great!

Todd: Like a concierge.

Mike: "I was looking for Giants tickets?

What aisle can I find them on?"

Sean: Summer Vacation played with Hard Girls a while back at VLHS in Pomona and you [facing Max] ran outside to puke moments after the set. Nerves?

Max: I have pretty bad anxiety sometimes. I usually throw up either before or after the show. Morgan: It used to be a lot worse when we started playing as teenagers.

Todd: Have you done anything to prevent

the anxiety?

Max: I started drinking. [laugher] That helps. It's hard to get out my head space sometimes. Morgan: One of the first shows we played that was going to have people there we didn't know...

Todd: That weren't your parents...

Morgan: My parents have only seen me play one time.

Max: My mom saw me play at my first show. She doesn't know how much worse I've gotten.

What are you even doing with your life? You're not even doing anything?'

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Mike: There were so many lies at the beginning of my musical endeavors.

Morgan: It was behind a teen center. Right before we were about to play, Max was like, "Hurry up. Start. Start." I hadn't even set up my things. He ran outside and barfed in this planter right as the governing people from the school were coming in.

Max: I was like fourteen.

Morgan: I was like seventeen.

Sean: You guys go way back, then?

Max: We've been playing together since I was thirteen and he [faces Morgan] was like fifteen. Our first band was called Jerk Dave, named after a friend's creepy friend.

Sean: Was he a jerk?

Morgan: It's a masturbation story.

Max: His mother [Dave's] caught him jerking

off in the corner of an empty room.

Mike: He was pantless and squatting.

Morgan: He was nude.

Max: That's how we named our band.

Mike: It was a great decision.

Max: Then we were called Pteradon. It was just me, Morgan, and our friend, Ian (Silber).

just me, Morgan, and our friend, Ian (Silber). Mike: I was in Shinobu. We played shows together, became friends, and ended up sharing a practice space together. Right about the same time, Matt (Keegan), the guitar player for Shinobu, had moved to New York. Bob and Jon (Jon Fu, drummer for Shinobu) both moved to Japan. Ian, the guitar player for Pteradon, decided he didn't want to tour. Two bands in a practice got whittled down to three people, basically.

Sean: Mike, you were voted San Jose's best

onitarist?

Mike: In 2002. I wasn't in a band or playing guitar at all at the time. I got a call from the San Jose Metro (a free weekly newspaper) one morning. I called back and the guy was like, "You won best local guitarist!"

Max: You were twenty-two?

Mike: No, I was eighteen or nineteen.

Todd: You were a prodigy. **Mike:** I was *clearly* a prodigy.

Max: Someone was stuffing the ballot box.

[laughter]

Mike: That's the only way I can make sense of it. I knew people who worked at the Santa Clara radio station (KSCU 103.3). I think people there were more zealous than I would've asked them to be.

Max: I don't think a lot of people were turning in their votes at the time.

Todd: So, if you got ten votes, you win.

Morgan: There was probably no internet vote. It was a phone vote.

Mike: There was an empty seat and I got

bumped into it.

Sean: How long did you hold the title? Mike: For a year. I got a certificate. I still

have the issues in my room. There's a picture of everybody holding up their things. "Here's San Jose's best!" I was eighteen and sneaking champagne at the bar. It was weird. That is what actually led to Shinobu. One of the other people there I knew ran a venue and they won best new venue.

Max: The only venue.

Mike: He (Chris Hill) was way older than me and he was getting ripped at the bar. He was also the DJ of the Rap\$callionz. [laughter]

Sean: It all goes back to the Rap\$callionz.

Mike: He said, "You won best local guitarist. Get a band together. Any band you want to play with, I'll set up the show." It was a cool venue he had, a warehouse near downtown. He had big acts come through. I was like, "Yeah. I'm going to put together a band and we're going to play with Rocket From The Crypt!" I asked, "Can you get them to come?" He was like, "Yeah, totally. No problem." [laughter] That never happened. But it got me to start the band.

Morgan: When you [talking to Mike] started Shinobu with Jon, you only had one song written. And Jon was like, "You have more songs written, right?" And you were like, "Oh, yeah. I've got tons." [laughter]

Mike: There were so many lies at the beginning of my musical endeavors.

Sean: How did you become three quarters of Classics Of Love with Jesse Michaels (Operation Ivy, Common Rider)?

Morgan: Our friend Skylar (Suarez) does sound at a club in San Francisco (Bottom of the Hill) and he used to work at Asian Man Records. We recorded some demos on a Tascam 8-track cassette recorder. I was having Skylar help me take the songs off and put them on a CD. Jesse was talking to Mike Park (of the Chinkees and Asian Man Records) and he said he wanted to record some demos. Mike said to do it with Skylar. Skylar really liked the Hard Girls stuff he had helped me with so he was talking to Jesse and he told him about us. Jesse wanted to do a 7" and maybe have a band on it. We met and it ended up working out.

Max: We got along really easily. We make bad jokes all of the time.

Morgan: One time, I started tickling him really bad before a show in the van.

Sean: Did you cross the line?

Morgan: No, we all ended up laughing and rolling in the van. I was like, "Yeah. This is probably going to work out."

Max: I stuck my nose in his ass a couple of

times. [laughter]

Mike: I think the first time we practiced, he asked about where we download music. We

told him it was easy. "Just get BitTorrent, look up whatever, and it does all of the work for you." He's like, "Does that work on a Mac?" I say, "Yeah, it works on a Mac." [exhales] "Well, I have a PC." [laughter] We had just met him. He's a punk luminary and we didn't know how to take that. I felt pretty one-upped by him being in hard joke mode so early.

Morgan: Very dry. I remember within the first ten practices, I was sitting behind the drum kit, waiting for Mike to get out of the bathroom, and we started playing "What's Up" by 4 Non Blondes. Jesse was singing it. It was really funny in, like, a comedy style. [laughter] Hard Girls comedy style. Sean: Every time Summer Vacation plays San Jose, I'm reminded that there's a strong nerd/computer culture.

Morgan: It is the Silicon Valley, Sean.

Max: We take everything back. The Silicon Valley TV show is one hundred percent accurate. [laughter]

Mike: It's suburbs. You get parents who don't want you to go out past six PM so they buy you something to keep you in your room.

Max: Or three PM—or never.
Mike: They keep you in shackles.

saved in my entire life so far.

Sean: What do you feel like you've given up by playing in Hard Girls?

Mike: A lot. I basically told my job that I can either quit to tour regularly or try to work remotely, which they're letting me try out. But I have an apartment with my girlfriend, student loans I need to pay back, and, if I go down to part-time, I need to pay for my health insurance. I'm going into it blind, hoping that things will work out well enough or I'm whittling down every bit of money that I've

Also, anytime you hear about a cool thing happening, but you happen to have a show at the same time—it might be an awful show to no one—you can't cancel it last minute. I won't cancel because I want to go to your pool party. You have an obligation and you do it. It is a little bit of a mania. You have to be a little bit crazy to want to do this at this age. If you have the desire, it's impossible to get rid of.

Max: It's impossible for me not to do it. If I don't do it, I get really depressed and I can't function. Well, I can function. I can piss. [laughter] I can do other things.

Mike: Great bowel movements.

Max: I don't have a degree. I basically waited to go on tour since I was sixteen.

Sean: You were holding out for these two

Max: For fucking ten years! I have put a lot of things on the back burner and things that

aren't being burned at all. I feel like I have somewhat of a backup plan. I love vino. I love sippin' it. If I need to get a job, I can get a job.

Sean: If all else fails, you turn to wine.

Morgan: That's what I do on a daily basis. [laughs] The biggest thing is money. You're not as certain where it's going to come from or if you're going to get any. For a long time, you try to live doing music part time, but then you're working all the time and you're not any happier. It's important to work on something that you can be proud of, especially artistically.

Mîke: I don't even believe in artistry. I'm a

millionaire. [laughter]

Morgan: It's a lot more fulfilling than getting employee of the week. Maybe it'll mean something to someone else. If I'm really proud of something, it feels good.

Mike: It's incomparable to any other feeling. When things go right, there's nothing like it. Max: I try not to look up while I'm playing, but if I happen to see someone enjoying it, it makes me super happy. It's the best high, man.

Sean: [looking at Morgan and Max] Two moms were previously mentioned...

Morgan: My parents have seen me play one time. I think they kind of picked up on that it's not comfortable for them to watch me play. They're there because they love you, not because they want to watch you play. I'm glad they can separate that. They never pretended to like my music or tell me that

I'm shitty. I'm glad they didn't do either of those things. [laughs]

Max: My stepdad did critique me once.

Morgan: He's a guitar player.

Max: When I was like fourteen, we wrote a song called "Stewardess Song." It was about falling in love with a stewardess on an airplane. The main refrain was: "Air sickness is not a problem / Love sickness is a problem."

Morgan: At the end I just yelled "SkyMall" over and over. [laughter] It was six minutes long.

Max: My stepdad said, "It's just not very grown up. You guys can definitely improve on playing." I just started playing drums! [laughter] My mom did come to a Classics Of Love show.

Morgan: Your brother had to save her from the pit.

Max: She got right up front. "Mom, you don't want to stand there." [in a squeaky voice] "It's fine, honey."

Morgan: It started to get going.

Max: Somebody bumped into my mom and my brother said, "That's my fucking mom!" And then pushed the kid out of the way.

Sean: Who was fourteen.

Max: Exactly. Then he escorted my mother into a safe place.

Sean: Any good comments after the show?
Max: She was like, "That was crazy!"
Morgan: She said about your brother...

Max and Morgan: [together in a squeaky

voice] "He saved me!"

Max: My mom had never seen a mosh pit or gone to a smaller rock show. She was right there.

Morgan: In the thick of it, man, laying down the fucking slam.

Max: Yeah, she was hardcore dancing. Mike: Open knife in the pit. [laughter]

Morgan: (to Mike) What was the last show your parents came to?

Mike: They've come to quite a few, to be honest. I just played with so many local bands and so many friends that I was like, "I don't expect you to come to all of these little things. I don't particularly want you see me play to two people. I'd rather invite you to something that might hopefully impress you."

Sean: My dad came to one show (Summer Vacation) and I remember that someone tried to climb on his back. He stayed, but afterward he said, "You guys yell too much."

Morgan: That's exactly what my dad said. "I couldn't really understand what you were saying." To be honest, I've personally tried to start singing a little bit more.

Max: Now that you're getting older.

Morgan: You can tell I'm a fully grown man. [laughter]

Sean: Max, you contracted a tour rash a while back?

Max: There were two, actually. The first: we toured up to Fest (punk festival in Gainesville, Florida) and on the way back we played a show in Little Rock. This house





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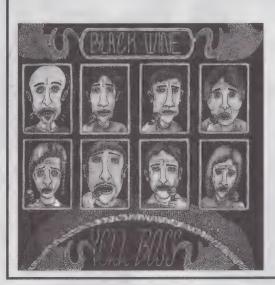
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show that we thought was going to be really bad. It turned out to be awesome, but we stayed at the house.

Sean: Mistake one.

Max: Mike and I got really drunk.

Morgan: I was in my car. We were just touring in my car. I had a Chevy Lumina. I was starting to get sick. I thought, "I'm not going to stay with these people. These people are going to stay up late. Fuck it. I'm going to take a Nyquil and just sleep in the car." Which was a good choice.

Max: They had this fold out couch that Mike

and I slept on.

Mike: Before it was even pulled out, one of the girls that lived there was like, "Do you guys like *Tank Girl*." Max was like, "I saw it when I was little." I had never seen it.

Mike: She was stumbling around, found it, and put it in the VHS player. She was like, "All right. I'm going to go to my boyfriend's house. Enjoy *Tank Girl*!" Then left.

Max: So there's one other roommate who

was a weird techno person.

Mike: The other guy fell asleep and had his TV on as loud as it could go with a *Family Guy* DVD on all fucking night.

Morgan: When I came in the morning to wake them up, it was on.

Max: It was blaring.

Mike: It was seriously the loudest thing I've ever heard on a TV. I had earplugs in two rooms over and I was covering my ears all night still hearing Stewie. [laughter]

Max: In the morning, the same guy started playing loud techno music. I wasn't sure if

he was trying to get us to leave.

Morgan: I woke up early and I didn't want to wake up everyone so I crouched down next to my car and peed down a storm drain. There was a community garden on the same block. I figured I could pee on the community garden side. I was half laying down on the curb, pretending to be looking for something in my car, while peeing down the storm drain. I came in and it was so loud. I was like, "Let's go." One of you was all ready sitting up and just said, [pauses] "Okay." We didn't talk at all. We just walked back to the car and drove away.

Max: A couple days later, I contracted a rash around my nose.

Mike: The couch was filthy.

Max: I still don't know what it was. I don't know if I'm a horribly diseased person or if it was leprosy. But I had this rash and never went to the doctor for it, because I couldn't afford to at the time. I had this rash for two or three months.

Sean: Mike didn't get a rash?

Mike: I was fine. I was just angry when I

Max: "Where the fuck's my rash?" Mike: "I was promised a rash for sleeping here? Also, I didn't get to see all of *Tank*

Girl." [laughter]

Max: The other time was when Shinobu and Pteradon were touring. Me and Matt Keegan (Shinobu, Bomb The Music Industry!) are really good friends, but we don't always get along. We were in Redding and Matt contracted this rash on his side. We were staying there and he kept talking about his rash. He was walking around without his shirt on. "You asshole, man!"

Mike: "Rash-hole!"

Max: He was just laying around on our sleeping bags and blankets with his shirt off and his rash out. It was annoying. At one point, he takes his pinky and rubs his rash then touches my lips.

Everyone: [ughh]

Morgan: There was a little tiff. Nobody got pushed or anything. It was *almost* pushing. Max: Ten days pass and we're in Omaha and

I wake up with hives everywhere. I didn't know what was going on.

Morgan: We got you Benadryl at the drugstore and then we drove to Des Moines.

Max: By the time we got to Des Moines, I

looked like a fucking ogre.

Mike: You looked like a medieval beggar.

Morgan: The king from Braveheart.

He played the show with his hooded

sweatshirt up.

Sean: On your face?
Max: My face was covered. On my eyelids.

Everywhere.

Mike: To add insult to injury, we played that show and we didn't know anyone in Des

Moines. Matt happened to know one person who had a friend in Des Moines. It ended up being this enormous frat house.

Max: It was really bizarre. It wasn't our market. [laughter] I walk up the steps to load in my sleeping bag and this girl walks past me. She looked horrified. I'm just like, "I can't handle this right now." So, I have a panic attack in the van. I drove to a walk-in clinic and found out I had chicken pox.

Sean: This wasn't what Matt had? Mike: Turns out he had shingles.

Max: Shingles is the same virus as chicken pox.

Morgan: I'd like to add that Matt has apologized. [laughter] Max had to stay at a family friend of my family for a week in Minneapolis.

Max: I passed out for two days. I did finish a Mario game.

Morgan: So it was worth it.

Max: I'm not very game-savvy so it did feel like an accomplishment. Everybody I know talks about video games, because I live in Silicon Valley, which is a great show.



My parents never pretended to like my music or tell me that I'm shitty. I'm glad they didn't do either of those things.



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Introduction Layou//Todd Taylor
Interview///Todd Taylor, Simon Sotelo, Bianca Barragan
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We stayed up 'til five in the morning. No drugs.

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t was 2000-somewhere around there. San Pedro was on fire musically. There were uncountable numbers of shows on 4th Street. They weren't venues. Punk houses. Sometimes the houses were the pre- and post- parties. Sometimes they were the whole shebang. I remember children being there. I remember a neighborhood kid with a knife, cackling, on a trampoline. I remember this girl—fourteen or fifteen—and she lived in the back of one of the houses. She played acoustic guitar, and // it wasn't like, "How darling, a little girl's playing; I wonder if she travels by canoe and draws raccoons." Fuck that safe, patronizing, quirky bullshit. She was really good. Fearless. Funny. She made the folks on the porch stomp and dance and shake their heads. Loss and celebrations were in the same wrapper. Talent's not something bestowed only on certain ages.

She was at ease amongst the freaks and weirdos and dirthead artists and wastoids and the punk underground that rivuleted and squirmed down that street. Encouragement from a diverse set of outcast peers is like spores. It's uncomfortable to give and receive compliments. Still, the fungus spreads. It's just hard to see in real time, almost invisible.

Several years passed. Ebbs and flows. The girl disappeared. I didn't know it at the time, but it was hard drugs and a broken

window that made her scarce.

More years. I saw her in a Pedro backyard, playing. Can Of Beans. Acoustic punk with backup. Small pills of overwhelming sadness, but the type of sadness that has sunshine when it dissolves into a form of unexpected medicine. Baby J sang songs of heartbreak. We talked a bit as the yard filled with BBQ smoke. She surprised me when I asked what she'd been up to. She'd joined the Air Force reserves and was working on a collaboration with Todd Congelliere, Jimmy Felix, and Chachi Ferrara (three quarters of a then-on-hiatus Toys That Kill) called Stoned At Heart. More years passed.

Now, in 2014, she's twenty-seven, with a deep catalog. I knew her rough sketch, the bullet points. It was high time to catch up

and have a long talk

Todd: What do you do, band-wise?

Baby J: Okay, I play solo. I still consider Can Of Beans my thing. Stoned At Heart is kind of on a break right now. But, hopefully, we'll make some new stuff soon. And Peach Kelli Pop has been taking a lot of my time lately. It's really fun. I dig it; playing the bass for a change. It's cool.

Todd: We're going to do a timeline. I don't remember the very first time I met you, but I remember that you were twelve years old and you were living in someone's backyard

... and my memory's fucked.

Baby J: I wasn't twelve when I lived there. I was twelve the first time I went there, with my older cousin, who was sixteen. Blue hair. Punk rocker. Used to go there all the time for shows. Todd: And we're talking Fourth Street in

Baby J: I moved in there when I was fifteen.
Todd: Take me through that. You moved into

the backyard, right?

Baby J: I actually lived in Danny's house first. Maybe about a year later, he got mad at me. I was doing drugs or something. [laughs] And then I went and moved into the backhouse—well, it's not even a backhouse—it's more like a shed at the house next door.

Todd: A glorified shed. But you're fifteen. How does that happen? Are you estranged from your parents?

Baby J: My parents, I have a very strange

relationship with both of them. Me and my Dad were fighting a lot. He sent me to live with my Mom in Arizona, but my Mom is pretty messed up in the head. I snuck out of there. I took a Greyhound to live with my cousin in northern California, in Redding. My cousin wired me money or something. I forget how it happened. And then, somehow, I took another Greyhound from there and went back to San Pedro and got a job at a bakery. I never went back to my parents. My Dad found out I was back in San Pedro. He was actually getting shipped out to Iraq, because he's in the Air Force. So he was over there and I just stayed living at Fourth Street.

Todd: To underscore. Fifteen.

Baby J: Yeah. [laughs] **Todd:** So, why San Pedro?

Baby J: My Dad's side of the family is all from there. That's pretty much why. What kept me there is definitely the music scene.

Todd: And how old are you now, so we can bracket the time?

Baby J: Just turned twenty-seven.

Todd: When did you start playing music? Baby J: I started playing guitar when I was eleven. I started writing songs when I was fourteen, right before I moved into Fourth Street, when I got into punk rock. When I first started playing, I was into the Beatles, classic rock. Stuff like that. But when I discovered punk, it's like, "Oh, I can write about stupid

stuff and it's okay?" F.Y.P was the first punk band that I got into. Very inspirational. Todd: So who first gave you your nickname

Baby J'

Baby J: I would say Laila (Rayyes) and Chris Kohler (Sexy) together. Because Layla came down for the summer. She was going to college in New York, the first summer that I lived at Fourth Street. She was like, "Oh my god. There's a fifteen-year-old girl living next door!" Chris was like, "Yeah, that's Baby Girl." It started as Baby Girl. Then they started calling me "J." Baby J, gradually.

Todd: Did this overlap with the baby stuck in the well in Texas?

Baby J: Yeah. Kind of. "Baby Jessica."

Bianca: Oh my god. [laughter]

Baby J: Kevin (Carle, Killer Dreamer, Kid Little, Cali Mucho) called me Baby Jessica. Todd: So what other jobs did you have

during this time?

Baby J: Besides doing the bakery, I was trimming some plants. [laughs] Gardening. That was pretty much it. Then I got a job at Starbucks and I was at the Starbucks for a couple of years. I worked at one in Palos Verdes. I quit that one. A year later, I got hired at the one in San Pedro.

Todd: With Rawl (Morales, Killer Dreamer, Mike Watt And The Missingmen)?

Baby J: I hated working with him. Whenever we were on shift together, he would always

RAZORCAKE 58



A year ago, I started going to Harold's during the week to play pool, or erotic photo hunt.

make me do the register and he would get to make the drinks. Every single time. He's all, "I'm just not doing the register." I'm like, "Fuck you, dude." Me and him used to fight like brother and sister.

Todd: Take us through how you're in the Air National Guard.

Baby J: Okay. [laughs] Pretty much, what happened was—I lived at Fourth Street from fifteen to eighteen-ish. In and out, kind of. And then I really got into a bad crowd. San Pedro tweakers. Hanging out with bums.

Todd: Sherm Alley.

Baby J: I was actually not allowed to go to Fourth Street for a year.

Todd: How'd you get eighty-sixed?

Baby J: I was on drugs. I was dating Bree at the time. We got in a fight one night and I broke a window. I punched it. After that, they were like, "You can't come back here." I was like, "Fine. Whatever." Then I was on the streets, doing drugs. I was just in a really bad spot. Nobody wanted to help me. Or, I mean, they wanted to help me, but I wouldn't let them help me.

My Dad, I saw him one time, and he's like, "You know, the Air National Guard's giving away twenty thousand dollar bonuses right now. You really need to clean yourself up. It's only one weekend a month after your training." I was like, "You know what? I don't know what else to do with myself." I had nowhere to live. I had no money. My Dad, he's like, "The only way I'm going to let you stay with me is if you enlist." So I enlisted. A couple months later, went to training. I was just expecting—"I'm just going to do one weekend a month when I come back. That's it."

Todd: Were you thinking it was going to be like *Private Benjamin* or something?

Baby J: I was just scared. I was pretty messed up. I was twenty when that happened. From eighteen to twenty was when I was just running around, doing bad stuff.

Todd: So you joined the Air National Guard. Do you think that helped you get away from the more negative things?

Baby J: Oh, yeah. By far. It's definitely helped me. My Dad, since I was a kid, was like, "You're going to join the military." I was always like, "Hell no. No way." Especially at that time. I'm a punk rocker. I know this.

Todd: It's a cognitive dissonance, to be sure. Baby J: It's definitely weird. I've never really gotten into politics or been aware of what's up with the war. I joined it for my personal reasons. Just simply trying to clean up.

Todd: What would other reasons be, besides

cleaning up? Is self-discipline part of that?

Baby J: Maybe it turned into that. I didn't know at the time. I was like, "I need to get off the streets."

Todd: Had your father been deployed prior to that, to a place that saw combat?

Baby J: No, he's a paper pusher in the Air Force. But I think he's been to Iraq, once, for a couple months. He wasn't out there with a gun or anything.

Todd: So what's your rank now? Baby J: I'm a staff sergeant. E5. Todd: What does AMXS stand for?

Baby J: It stands for aircraft maintenance squadron.

Todd: You're a Grizzly, is that correct?

Baby J: Yeah. [laughs] You did your research.

Todd: And here's a picture of you looking at a book and you're figuring out the torque on something.

Baby J: Oh, yeah.

Bianca: Where is that picture from?

Todd: It's the Grizzly's magazine. *On Guard.* So what is torque value on that specific bolt? What were you trying to do in the photo?

Baby J: I have no idea. Bianca: Just posing.

Baby J: This was my second year in. I look so concerned.

Todd: It looks like you're concentrating. Those are thick binder books. Do you have to change yourself, going from Air Force to punk rock and back? What are the biggest transitions? Everybody does it subtly, whether you're with your family or your friends. Or if you feel safe around people, you can be one way.

Baby J: It's interesting. When I first joined, you weren't allowed to be gay in the military. So that was a big thing. I couldn't talk about my girlfriend at work. I couldn't let them know. It was weird. In that unit, there are a lot of really conservative, older people. A lot of old people in the Guard. Because, usually, they go from active duty and then they join the Guard to mellow out.

Todd: Semi-retire.

Baby J: At first, it was very challenging because I felt like I couldn't talk about anything in my personal life at work. I was really quiet when I was at work. I still kind of am. People will be like, "Let me be your Facebook friend." And I just straight-up tell people, "I don't become friends with people at work. I'm sorry. It's not going to happen. Nothing personal."

Todd: The internet confirms that because you were hard to find. Which is great. My

father worked for the Air Force—he wasn't in the Air Force—for over twenty years. He did family support services. Spouse support when someone's deployed for a long time. Finances. Resumes. All that stuff.

Baby J: That's a better job than I have. I wish I would have just got an office job. But I definitely do like working with my hands.

Todd: Take us through a typical day. What are you fixing? What part of the war machine? **Baby J:** Oh my god. I work on unmanned airplanes.

Todd: So drones.

Baby J: Drones. Yeah. I don't really do any of the technical stuff. They have avionics troops for that. I do refuel. Change the oil. There's a bolt loose, I tighten it. There's some troubleshooting involved. Calibrating stuff. Oil pressure's too high. Gotta adjust this screw.

Todd: So pretty advanced maintenance.

Baby J: It's just basic stuff.

Todd: So how long is your commitment to them?

Baby J: I actually just re-enlisted for another three years, which was a very hard decision for me. I literally waited until the day before.

Todd: What were you balancing?

Baby J: Well, I had been in for six years. I got promoted to staff sergeant after four years. After I got sergeant, everything got really easy. I don't know why. They kind of laid off me. I'm only doing one weekend a month right now. I make a couple hundred bucks. I don't really do much but sit in the office. There are tons of other new people who need to do the work. It's a good thing to fall back on. When I'm short on money, I can be like, "Look, can I work for a couple weeks?" They usually are pretty good about letting me do that.

I think part of me is kind of scared to get out. I don't know what I would do. I don't think I could go back and work a coffee shop job. I tried that a couple years ago, like doing it at the same time. It was weird. I was full-time with the Air National Guard for my first three years in and I was making a good amount of money. I quit that job because I was actually miserable when I was full-time. I got a job at a coffee shop. Ten bucks an hour. And I was like, "I can't live off this. It's just not possible." And that's when I actually deployed for my first time. Right after that. Todd: Let's talk about a deployment. What's it like?

Baby J: I don't like it when I'm there. Or I didn't realize I liked it when I was there.



But after leaving, I definitely feel changed, in a good way. I wouldn't say anything traumatic happened to me. There were some scary attacks on the base, but I wasn't out of the base. I didn't have to go shoot people or anything. I'm on the base, I'm fixing planes. It's kind of like prison. [laughter] It is. What I like about it, when I was there, I got a lot of time to self-reflect. I can't text my friends whenever I want. I can't be on the internet any time I want.

Todd: It's like being in 1983.

Baby J: You have to entertain yourself. Most of the people there. I don't want to hang out with. I do because everyone needs the social bond. Yeah, I'm kind of forced to interact with these people that I'd never interact with. And I didn't realize until after I left-I was like, "That was kind of cool." I feel like I change a lot of people, too. They're like, "Whoah. You're like this lesbian punk girl in the Air Force." They normally wouldn't like me in real life, but we're working together every day, twelve hours a day, all day. They're like, "Oh, you're kinda cool. When we get back to the States, come and meet my family." I'm like, "Whoah. You're this conservative Republican dude who would never want me to meet their family under other circumstances."

Todd: There is a mutual respect for work. And, also, in the back of your mind, you're like, "My life kind of depends on this person performing their duties." Not specifically, but as a collective.

Baby J: It's actually interesting, too. Both times when I went to Afghanistan, I didn't know anyone who I was working with. They kinda just throw you in there. Right away, because there's no girl mechanics—there was one other one on my last trip, but she was really shitty. And, usually, girls who are mechanics, do suck. It's sad for me to say that. They aren't really that good. That's just statistics. When they see me, immediately, they think, "Oh. A girl. She's going to be shitty." That sucks. Everyone thinks that as soon as I walk in. I really do have to prove myself. My first one or two weeks there, I have to show them what's up. And then they usually become cool.

Todd: So during that time, do you have time to work on music?

Baby J: My last trip, I did. Just because the living quarters that I stayed in were pretty cool. I actually had my own room. It's pretty much a bunch of shacks near the flight line.

There's just a room full of random junk. People left shit behind. I found this room that I could play music in and there was actually a keyboard in there. Somebody gave me a guitar. I got my computer. I can record stuff. I wrote a bunch of songs when I was there.

Todd: Fuck, yeah. Didn't you practice bass, too?

Baby J: Yeah. When I was out there, two months before I came back last time, was when Allie (Hanlon) said: "I need a bass player for Peach Kelli Pop." I was like, "I'm going to be back in two months." She's like, "Perfect. Learn these songs." She sent me YouTube videos to practice.

Todd: To learn your tabs.

Baby J: Yeah, yeah. I was practicing the whole time. I actually had an eighty dollar bass sent out there.

Todd: There's a huge chance it'll show up damaged or won't show up, so why not?

Baby J: It did take a long time. I think I only had it for the three weeks before I left. But I learned.

Todd: With Peach Kelli Pop, how did that happen? She moved from Ottawa?

Baby J: She moved from Ottawa to the Bay Area, to L.A.

I don't want to play these old songs that I wrote about my girlfriend ten years ago. [sighs] I hate it.

Todd: And that's how you two met? Baby J: Actually, she was living in the Bay and Peach Kelli Pop did a tour. They played Pedro for the first time. Afterward, they stayed at my house and we had the craziest dance party ever. We stayed up 'til five in the morning. No drugs. We just stayed up until the sun came up and sang—because we have a PA in our living room-danced and did karaoke. It was a really fun night. A ton of people came over. It was a huge party. Then they came back again a few months later. We did the same thing.

Todd: Kindred spirits.

Baby J: Because she doesn't even normally party that much on tour. Even the other girls in the band were like, "Oh my god.

Allie's partying."

Todd: There's "partying" and there's no-

drugs, having-fun partying.

Baby J: We had a good time. I think she was really stoked that I was available to be in the band. "Hell, yeah. I want you to be in the band." It was a good night.

Todd: So let's go back to Pedro. Two things I want to know about Pedro from you are: Who are the people who are most influential to you as a musician—either influential by action, or by working with them?

Baby J: Of course, the obvious would be Todd Congelliere (Toys That Kill, URTC, Recess) and Mike Watt (Minutemen, Dos, Secondmen, Banyan, Iggy And The Stooges). [laughs] Just because they've been the most successful and they've influenced a lot of people. Gave Pedro a name.

Todd: And they're available, in Pedro.

Baby J: They're sticking with it. But, definitely, in the beginning, when I moved into Fourth Street, I thought everyone was so amazing and cool. "I want to be like every single one of them." I think everyone's influenced me. Rawl, Kevin, Todd, Casey (Ferrara, Toys That Kill, Underground Railroad To Candyland). Definitely. That's what's kept me there.

Todd: This was about ten years ago; I was talking to Todd and he was curious about who the next generation of bands would be in Pedro. There were bands that formed, then they just disappeared. There are people, such as yourself, who are a little bit younger, but are in the middle of it. It doesn't even seem generational.

Baby J: Honestly, I feel like I'm part of the Rawl/Kevin generation.

Todd: That's true.

Baby J: I don't feel like I'm part of this new thing going on. I'm pretty burnt out. Of course, I want to be active. I'm like, "Whoah. Who are all of these people?" They're not part of my group.

Todd: I think it's hitting now. There was a

gap for about five years.

Baby J: I'm not trying to say that Pedro's dead, because it's definitely not. They've got Harold's. A year ago, I started going to Harold's during the week to play pool, or erotic photo hunt. I think it's dying down, compared to what it used to be. I don't know how to make it any better.

Todd: It is dormant to what it was compared to before. Pedro's relatively small, compared to L.A. as a whole, but it's really susceptible if there isn't a reliable house, or an allages place, or somewhere you can have shows and the cops aren't going to come, or knuckleheads aren't going to show up en masse. So what would you say, for someone coming into San Pedro for the first time, is something they can't miss?

Baby J: Dude, the thing is, all the places that I think are great, Busy Bee (Market and sandwich shop). I like Nam's Red Door (Vietnamese Restaurant) a lot, if we're talking restaurants. A lot of people don't like that stuff. "Oh, yeah. It's good." But I could tell they don't think it's as good as I do. I think it's growing up there. You grow up with these places. I think you have to grow up there to get it.

Todd: Simon and Bianca, have you been to Sunken City?

Simon: Yes. Although, I've only been there

Baby J: I love it at night. I used to go there and play guitar at night.

Simon: It's really cool and really spooky, but the whole impression of the Sunken City is kind of lost when I can't really see the ground

Bianca: The first time I went to San Pedro, I took a bus to go to the San Pedro Fish Market and I ate so much food that I fell asleep on the bus home and woke up, got into my apartment, and fell asleep. I was out for five hours. We ordered this tray of food. It came with garlic bread that was an entire French loaf. So much food, but we're like, "But we paid for it." I really enjoyed my experience, though. Had a great time. The fish was good.

Baby J: The fish market. I haven't been there since I was a kid.

Todd: I think for the San Pedro Lobster Fest... Simon: We're all doing lobster hands right now.

Todd: The claws. They actually have to import the lobsters from the East Coast because they have claws. The lobsters on the West Coast don't have claws, but people want fucking claws on their lobsters.

Bianca: How do they survive with no claws?

Todd: I don't know. Head butts?

Bianca: What's up?

Simon: I think life is just easier on the West Coast.

Baby J: Those lobsters are East Coast lobsters?

Todd: I'm telling you that. Baby J: That's so messed up.

Todd: I am almost a hundred percent sure.

Bianca: Lies. So many lies.

Simon: Childhood just shattered. Todd: It just talks itself out of situations.

Bianca: "We don't really want to do this, guys. Let's not fight."

Todd: So you have tons of stuff written but not recorded. Is that correct?

Baby J: Oh, yeah.

Todd: Like hundreds of songs?

Baby J: Yeah. It's funny because I just moved into a house in Lincoln Heights yesterday and I have all these boxes that I haven't opened in years because I've just been moving around so much. Half of them are just notebooks. Songs I haven't played in a long time. I used to write so many songs. A song a day, at least. Every day. Couldn't go through the day without writing a song, or playing the guitar, at least. Yeah, somehow that's all dwindled away. I'm just older.

Todd: What would you say are some reoccurring topics that you sing about?

Baby J: Depressing shit. [laughs] I like to sing about shit that I'm sad about. I don't know why. I was thinking about this the other day. I'm emo. It's crazy. I write a lot about relationships, of course, which I'm trying to-I think that's why I haven't been writing that much. 'Cause I think it's so dumb. I don't want to write heartbreak songs anymore. It's depressing. It's kind of like why I haven't been wanting to do Can Of Beans, 'cause I don't want to play these old songs that I wrote about my girlfriend ten years ago. [sighs] I hate it.

Todd: Also, if you're in a good relationship, you don't want your partner to be thinking, "Why are you singing all of these sad songs?" Baby J: I don't know how to sing about happy stuff. That's what I'm trying to do. It's hard.

Todd: Isaac from the Arrivals said the same thing. They really had to dig deep for "Simple Pleasures in America." "What do you like that



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I want people to come to me. I like to be asked to do things.

gives you joy?" "Riding my bike. Library. Drinking whiskey with my friends."

Simon: We're getting on the right track. We're getting better.

Baby J: That's my favorite Arrivals song.

Todd: What's your biggest block right now? Baby J: My main challenge is there's too much else going on. I literally don't have time for stuff. It sucks. I was thinking about this, like how I remember being a kid and seeing my aunt, adults, "I'm busy." I was like, "What?" I didn't understand it. But now, I understand. I've got to pay bills. I gotta do this. I gotta run to the post office.

Simon: I'm fuckin' tired. Bianca: I'd like to sleep.

Baby J: There's not enough time in the day for me anymore, and I don't know why. It sucks. I'm hoping that I can free up some time. That's my next goal, so I can write more. I definitely miss playing guitar. I do it every couple weeks. It makes me sad.

Bianca: Write a song about it. [laughter]
Todd: That's when I think you realize you're becoming a responsible adult. Not in only the crappy ways, but "I want to get through all this stuff. I gotta get it done, but I still want to

leave time to be creative." And not giving that away because we see so many people who are shelled-out, or bitter, or lash out at other people because they're not doing it themselves.

Baby J: I never want to be that person. I know that I'm going to be writing songs soon. I know that it's not the end. I'm not stopping. **Todd:** So let's talk about *Porchcore* zine.

Baby J: Porchcore rules.

Todd: The name came from?

Baby J: Fourth Street.

Todd: It's contentious. There are people who disavow the concept and existence of Porchcore—not your zine—that it was the figment of someone's imagination.

Bianca: That's really interesting because she says it does.

Baby J: It does.

Todd: This is prior to the zine, prior to the label. Nothing to do with you. Way before you.

Baby J: There are a lot of stories of where it came from.

Todd: Which one do you believe?

Baby J: I tell it in the first issue. I think Rawl, or somebody at Fourth Street, when I first moved in there, made stickers. I just saw the stickers around the house. I was like, "Porchcore? What

the fuck?" And then I got this tape that I think that Jack Spraljia (Underground Railroad To Candyland) gave me. He's like, "You'd really like this." It's just a girl, acoustic guitar. I think Jag Offs were on tour and they played with her. She opened. She had these demo tapes and it was called "Porchcore Punks Love for Sin." Her name is Sari. And that tape was the first time anyone ever saw Porchcore, and then Rawl took it and ran with it. That's how I think it originated. That tape fuckin' rules. I still have it. It's my oldest tape. I've tried to track that girl down. She's MIA. I think she did start a new band. I wrote them. Nothing. Nobody wrote back. Fuck 'em.

Todd: And you're doing a Porchcore label, right? Four releases so far.

Baby J: I just wanted to release stuff. I was like, "I wonder what it's like to release records?" I did the Can Of Beans album, Massenger, then Peach Kelli Pop 7".

Todd: And Thee Ultimate Baby J.

Baby J: That was Craig (Ibarra, Water Under The Bridge, *The Rise and Fall of the Harbor* Area), but I just put it up on the site.

Todd: How often do you break the law—because in your video, you are sitting on a

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washing machine right in front the sign that says, "Do not sit on the washing machine."

Baby J: Craig made me do it.

Todd: So you're susceptible to peer pressure. Baby J: I really didn't want to do that ... I break the law when the law is stupid. [laughter] I don't know. I'll turn right on a red when it says, "Do not turn on red." I do that pretty often.

Simon: Where did Can Of Beans, the name,

come from?

Baby J: It came from me and Laila being goofy stoners. When we first became friends, we were being silly one day at Fourth Street. I was playing this guitar that was really messed up. There were three strings on it. They were all rusty. I was playing these weird chords. She started singing these lyrics. We were just in the kitchen, stoned, for about an hour. Everyone's walking by. "What are you guys doing?" Singing—just funny stuff. There was this can of beans on the table.

Simon: That simple.

Baby J: That's seriously how it came about. I swear.

Simon: What kind of beans were they?

Baby J: They were some old beans. Seriously, they were from the Mexi-market around the corner from Fourth Street. It was one of those places that had ketchup that's thirty years old. Everything looks really old.

Bianca: It's all dusty.

Todd: It seems like a front for something else. Baby J: Exactly. Somebody bought this can of beans from there. It was from the '80s. I looked at the expiration date. 1987.

Simon: Did anyone eat 'em?

Baby J: I don't think so. I didn't.

Bianca: I had a question about the dog on the Can Of Beans album cover. I want to know whose dog that is, because it's really cute.

Baby J: I don't know whose dog that is. Anthony, the bass player, he found it on Reddit. Some random person posted it. Anthony sent it to me one morning. I remember it was after some crazy night. I looked at my phone right when I woke up and I laughed for ten minutes, looking at this picture. In my bed. This dog is photo bombing these leaves and the look on the dog's face. Right away, "We've gotta use this as the album cover. We're doing it."

Todd: You're also involved with a lot of collaborations, like with Stoned At Heart. Do

you enjoy the collaborations?

Baby J: Oh, yeah. I love it. That's my favorite part about it. When we play shows, Todd's like, "Let's just play all your songs." I'm like, "No. I want to sing your backups and stuff." I love collaborating. I get really nervous with Can Of Beans, knowing it's my songs and I have control over what I do. I like

other people putting their two cents in.

Todd: I've heard it this way, too—doing stuff solo—there's nowhere to hide.

Baby J: It's weird because when I first started playing, before I had Can Of Beans when I was fifteen, I just played acoustic after the shows at the parties at Fourth Street. That's where I felt comfortable before and my friends would sing along. I still feel weird plugging in. I'm an acoustic guitar player. That's where I feel comfortable. I like playing acoustic solo.

Todd: Looping it all together, how do you see yourself as a musician? How would you

explain yourself?

Baby J: I don't know. I feel like I'm in such a transition right now. I feel like, the stuff that I do write—say the stuff I wrote last year when I was in Afghanistan—it's so different from what I wrote before. What do you mean by, "How do I see myself as a musician?"

Todd: Do you consider yourself ... Okay, this is going to sound horrible. I don't want it to sound like a genre, but how do you place it in your own mind? As folk punk?

Baby J: I do. Folk punk. You nailed it.

[laughs]

Todd: Melodic. Pretty, in the way that it's not dissonant.

Baby J: I like to play stuff that I would want to hear. For a long time, I did like depressing emo music. I loved Modest Mouse, Jets To Brazil. I really liked stuff that was from the heart. I like playing music that people can get down with. [laughs]

Todd: So did you decide on a title? Is it Afghanis-jams?

Baby J: Afjamistan.

Bianca: Oh my god. Oh, wow.

Baby J: I did eight songs there and I recorded them. I only put a few up on my Baby J Bandcamp. I really like those songs. They're fun. I don't know if it's just because they're new. It was a lot of keyboard action. I like playing the keyboard.

Simon: I don't care what it sounds like. I'd listen to something called *Afjamistan*. [laughs]

Baby J: Look it up!

Todd: So a little bit more serious. You've been a musician who's been in the public eye for a decade and this is the second interview you've ever done.

Baby J: Yeah, pretty much. I think so. **Todd:** Why do you think that is?

Baby J: I don't know. I don't really throw myself out there.

Todd: That's true. There's no PR machine behind you.

Baby J: I want people to come to me. I like to be asked to do things. If people ask me to do it, I'll do it. But I'm not going to be like,

"Let me be in your zine." I don't know. Is that what people do?

I definitely want to do more stuff, with Porchcore, too. I like doing stuff for myself fulfillment and enjoyment. Like, when I did the first issue of *Porchcore*, I was in Afghanistan. "I want to make a zine. I have a lot of stuff I want to say." It actually started with "Baby J.'s Guide to Game." I'll tell you how it started. Before I left for Afghanistan, I was single for a year, which is crazy for me. I've been in back-to-back, ridiculous, drawnout relationships. But I really perfected my game. Seriously. I'm not being sarcastic.

When I was in Afghanistan, my friends were writing me relationship problems. They weren't necessarily asking for advice-well, some of them were. I just found myself saying the same thing to all of them. "I need to hook up with someone." "I'm lonely," or whatever. "What do I do about this person?" "I have a crush on this guy." Why is everyone coming to me with their relationship things? Man, should just write a book. I started writing. I was going to put it out as a little pamphlet. Then I was like, "Why don't I just do a zine?" and put a little bit of that in every zine. So that's what I've been doing. I've been writing other stuff, too. I like writing. It's written like how I talk. It's very informal.

Todd: Please, just give us one part to your

Baby J: Confidence and smoothness. [laughter and clapping] That's the recipe. Seriously, that's what gets you laid.

Simon: The problem is getting that.

Baby J: My guide says how to. Read the first issue.

Simon: I did have one question. You have a really unique singing voice. Do people ever

mistake you for a guy?

Baby J: Yeah. It's happened to me. A couple of times, people have written the Can Of Beans Facebook page. "What's up dude?" Or "man?" I could just tell they think I'm a dude, or a bro. It's definitely happened. Or, one time at the Fest, after we played one time, someone thought I was a guy even when he saw me play. "Bro, that was so cool!"

Bianca: "Thanks, girl." [laughs]

Baby J: I'm just used to that now. I don't get offended if someone mistakes me. I get more compliments than anything for my voice, which is cool. Because I'm very self-conscious about it.

Todd: You're smooth and confident. [laughs]



All social change starts with a conversation.

I've helped organize a monthly Razorcake happy hour and social event for the last year and a half. It's a chance for contributors and friends to get together, have drinks, and enjoy the music covered in Razorcake's pages. We've been holding our event at Bar 107 in downtown Los Angeles for about the last year. It was there that I met Matt Dwyer. Matt's a stand-up comic who also works the shift when we come in to play our tunes. Through Matt I found out about a non-profit called Jail Guitar Doors, started by Brother Wayne Kramer of the MC5. With Jail Guitar Doors, Wayne and some of his other musician buddies go into jails and prisons, give away instruments, and hold music classes for the inmates as a form of therapeutic rehabilitation, a bit of socialization and levity, and, most importantly, humanity for those who have lost their freedoms, liberties, and rights by being behind bars.



WAYNE KRAMER

Interview and introduction by Jeff Proctor
Photos by El Diablo
Layout by Matt Average

It sounded like a really interesting idea and I was intriqued by the mission. Matt put together a benefit comedy show with some of his comic pals to raise money and awareness for JGD. Wayne Kramer was there, as well. He spoke completely off the cuff. No notes, no prepared speech or comments. He spoke honestly and openly about his past, the help he got, and the troubling, current state of corrections in our country. Brother Wayne's passion for the cause was clearly visible. It was moving. Afterwards, I asked Matt if he thought Wayne might be willing to sit down and do an interview. Brother Wayne was more than happy to spend an hour on an unusually rainy Saturday afternoon with me and tell his story and the story of Jail Guitar Doors.



Wayne: I've tried over the years to not say things that I didn't want to see in print. When you're young and you're starting out, you say a bunch of stuff and then it shows up in print and you say, "Oh! Why did you print that?!" and it's like, "Oh. Well, that's because you said it!"

Jeff: I'll use that as a jumping off point. I read that one of the reasons you guys, MC5, got in trouble with Elektra was because of a quote, or misquote, in *Rolling Stone*. Something that you said, they disliked.

Wayne: That wasn't a misquote. I actually said "Fuck Hudson's."

Jeff: [Laughs] Okay.

Wayne: We put it in an ad, actually. It was ad

copy we wrote.

Jeff: And that was regarding the first record. Wayne: There was a big chain of department stores in Michigan called Hudson's. And I shopped at those stores from the time I was a little boy. Years later, I made records in a band called the MC5. And Hudson's refused to sell my records. And I was incensed! I was a loyal Hudson's customer! My whole life, my whole family shopped there. Everybody shopped there. Elektra told us we had complete artistic control over our ads and how we were publicized. So we wrote an ad that said "Fuck Hudson's. If they won't sell you the record, break the door down!" Elektra frowned on that and used that as one of the excuses for firing us, kicking us off the label, and saying we were unprofessional—which we were. But, we were proud of it. Deliberately.

Jeff: This week was the forty-fifth anniversary of that record (Kick Out the Jams) coming out.

Wayne: True.

Jeff: The first record was a live record. And out of every band I can think of, that's the only one that I can think of that stands out

as a debut live album. What was the thought process behind having that be a live record as the first one right off the bat?

Wayne: It would have been prohibitively expensive to record the MC5 in a proper studio at that time. The band was so undisciplined that it could have cost an amount of money beyond what the record company was willing to spend. And, really, what we did best was play live. So, we concluded that, in the revolutionary spirit of the band, let's let the first album be a live album. Personally, I was not happy with the recording. We played much better on many other nights. And the record company assured me that if I didn't like it, we would re-record until we got one that I liked. I said, "I don't like it." They said, "That's great. We're putting it out."

Jeff: How do you feel about it now forty-five

years later

Wayne: Well, you know, it's a great document. And it is honest in that it captures the energy of an MC5 show and the near hysteria, hysterical level we operated on. I'm pleased with how it's managed to be discovered by a new generation every eight or ten years. The next crop comes along and they say, "Yeah, but did you ever hear about this band, the MC5?"

Jeff: When you listen to it, it's a really wild, free, revolutionary record. Tons of bombast. **Wayne:** Over the top.

Jeff: There was a quote from Robert Christgau. He did a *Village Voice* review of the record in 1969. In it he said (paraphrasing) that Blue Cheer was the logical extension of 1958 hop music and that you guys were Detroit's answer to Blue Cheer. And when I listen to the record, I feel like I hear the Blue Cheer comparisons. Because they were probably the other band at the time that was really playing loud and fast and wild like that.

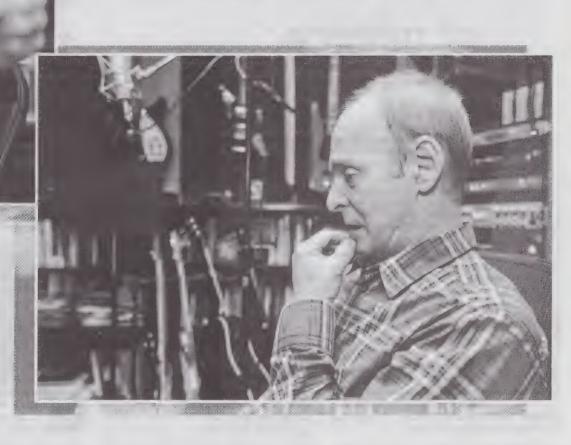
But the hop music part, I feel like really came out later with the second album, *Back in the U.S.A.* On that one, you start to get songs that are a little shorter, more focused, more poporiented. Was there anything in particular, a change in the band, a change in the way you guys decided to record, the influence of Jon Landau (producer) that led to the change in sound between the two records?

Wayne: When you're young and you pour your heart and soul into your ambition and you're naïve—I was all these things—I thought that it was really important what people said about you in the press. I thought it really mattered. And in some ways, it did in the '60s. The press was taken very seriously. The music press, the intelligentsia people took their music seriously in those days.

And we had got criticized in some quarters for the lack of discipline in the actual playing, in the performance. It really stung me. I was young and it hurt my feelings. The sense was that I couldn't play. And I knew I could play. And I knew that Fred Smith could play. And we played well together. And that Rob Tyner was a creative genius at what he did. And I knew that the band really was a great band. So, I think it's fair to say I overreacted to the criticism. So, I wanted the second album to prove our critics wrong and make an album that was in tune, the tempos were correct, the songs were short and to the point, concise, well-produced, professionally done. And take that broad expanse of energy and focus it down to a laser beam.

Jeff: And I think it still has some of that subversiveness, like the song "American Ruse," is this catchy pop song, rock'n'roll song...

Wayne: You could make the argument that *Back in the U.S.A.* is a more political album than *Kick Out the Jams*, just in terms of lyrical content—more overtly political.



You know, there's underlying politics that is always there in art. But now we're more specifically addressing the war, oppression, violence, teen culture, that kind of stuff.

Jeff: At that point, had you guys already distanced yourselves from John Sinclair (notable participant in the Yippie movement, founder of the White Panther Party, former band manager of the MC5), at least professionally? Wayne: It all happened around the period of making Back in the U.S.A. John had an ongoing legal battle all during his time with the MC5, which culminated in him getting a nine-and-a-half to ten-year prison term for possession of two joints. John was really made the scapegoat for the MC5. I suppose if he had just been a mild-mannered jazz poet and journalist, he might not have got that time. But since he was the champion of the MC5, they came down on him with both feet and they gave him the max.

It was a very turbulent time. It was a very difficult time for all us to get through having our interlocutor to the outside world getting kidnapped by the state and get sent to state prison. And we were trying to find our own identity as distinct from John's and the White Panther, hard-line Marxist line. None of us really knew what we were doing. [Laughs] We were all making it up as we went along. And so it was difficult and really hard personally for me and John. Because I always loved him and always respected him and always supported him, even if he didn't think I did. I did.

And then later on after he was released, the Michigan Supreme Court agreed with our contention that nine-and-a-half to ten was unconstitutional, it was cruel and unusual punishment. And I got into my own trouble with the police and got to prison myself. When I got back from prison, it was as if everything had all worked out. And John and I resumed our great friendship and are best friends to this day. We always were, but we had a rough time then.

Jeff: In talking about John and his legal issues and you and yours as well, the thing I think you guys are probably most well known for is playing the '68 protest when the riots

broke out at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago. And I don't know if it was because of this that sparked it, or it had already begun before that moment, but it seems like there was a lot of surveillance on you guys. The police and FBI have their eyes on you guys and they're trying to catch you for something. Did you guys know that you were being watched and followed?

Wayne: Yeah, they're very clumsy.

Both: [Laughter]

Wayne: They're not smooth at all. So, we knew our phones were tapped. They would actually harass us. They would send Detroit police officers to sit outside our house, shine spotlights on our windows at night, and run their sirens. If we would go out to go to a gig, we'd be pulled over and all the gear would get pulled out of the van and everyone would be searched. We were the subject of organized government harassment.

We know now through the Freedom of Information Act that we were the subject of a Justice Department campaign that was called COINTELPRO (Counterintelligence

The system has just created a perfect storm of misery.

Program). And it was designed to neutralize domestic protest. Anyone who disagreed with the government became a target of the FBI. This would be the White Panther Party, the MC5, the Yippies, SDS (Students for a Democratic Society), the Black Panther Party, the anti-war movement, the civil rights movement. Everyone who disagreed with J. Edgar Hoover and John Mitchell (Attorney General and Watergate conspirator) and Richard Nixon became targets.

It wasn't pleasant. It was a horrific thing to consider that the government was listening on your phones and following you around for doing what we're required to do in a democracy! In a democracy, if you don't like something, you are required to say something about it! Democracy is participatory. All of us were patriots. What we were doing at its core was patriotic. I believe the founding fathers had a pretty good idea. Not perfect, but good. And I'm willing to stand with them and try to support egalitarian, democratic principles. I think they're admirable. That's how we move forward as a civilization. I thought that in 1968 and I think that today.

Jeff: Do you think we're in a climate, politically, where we're going back to that paranoia—where NSA, NDAA, Freedom Act, and those kinds of things—everyone's under some sort of surveillance.

Wayne: I think there's a great deal to be concerned about. The intelligence-gathering machinery after 9/11 grew exponentially, completely uncontrolled. And no one knows how much money was spent. And nobody knows where that money went. There have been a few reports that have been pretty illuminating. There was a series of investigations that came out in a book called Top Secret America, by the journalist Dana Priest. They were looking at the security and intelligence gathering of the United States government. It was really chilling and I've seen nothing to contradict it. We're in a serious democratic crisis as regards surveillance right now. Because this is a whole new paradigm, the internet, and the ability to snoop on a level—they know what kind of movies you like to download, who you talk to-I just think this is something to be really concerned about.

Jeff: When you went to jail in 1975, you went to Lexington Federal Prison. While you were there, you met Red Rodney, who was the trumpeter for Charlie Parker's band. Can you tell me about what prison was like for you and also what your relationship with Red Rodney was like?

Wayne: Sure. Well, prison is probably the second or third worst trauma that a person can endure. Maybe the death of a child would be more profound, but to lose one's freedom is something none of us are really prepared for, what that really means. And that's the accountability that we've arrived at in our civilization today. We don't have corporal punishment anymore, but we still have capital punishment. But, we don't have corporal punishment, so your debt to society is paid in the length of time that you lose your liberty.

And I went to prison at the tail end of what they called the rehabilitative era, where a lot of thinking and money were thrown at prisoners to try to figure out where they made their mistake and what they could do to make sure they didn't come back to prison again. How could they go back to the free world and participate in society and be part of the world and rejoin their friends and family. And it was working pretty well. In those days we had about 300,000 people in prison in America and today we have 2.3 million people in prison in America. Here in California we have the best prison system in the world; if there can be such a thing.

Jeff: Right

Wayne: It's almost a contradiction in terms, a good prison system. There is no such thing as a good prison system. But, we have the lowest recidivism rates. So, to go to prison—to be a young man, sentenced to the sentence I was given, which was four years, which I thought was pretty severe. As it turned out, as new sentencing laws emerged as a result of the war on drugs, this escalating war on the American people, mostly poor people and sick people—for the same offense I was given four years, under today's laws you can be given a life sentence.

So, I was looking at the four years and I was devastated. I never in a million years imagined myself ending up in prison. There was a running joke in the band. When we

would go down south, we'd leave Detroit—anytime we'd play Ohio, or Illinois, or Florida—we'd drive south on I-75, and we'd go past Milan Federal Prison (in Michigan) and we'd be smoking joints and drinking and we're going on about the gig and we're in the band, yeah! And I'd be smoking a joint and I'd be driving past the prison and I even said once, "I may do some stupid shit in my life, but I'll never do something so stupid as to end up in there."

And then one day I was in there looking out at the traffic on I-75 saying, "I've been waiting my whole life to fuck up this bad." [Laughter] So, it was a terrible, shocking dose of reality for me that these people—prison authorities, police, prosecutors, judges, had all the power. And depending on how I wanted to play it, they had something for my ass. If I wanted to play it easy, then I could do easy time. If I wanted to play it hard, I could do hard time. You know, I'm not a killer. I'm not a tough guy. I just wanted to go home. So I took advantage of everything that they made available to me. I did all the counseling and group therapy. And I actually gained some insight into what my problem was. And then the fact that I ended up meeting Red Rodney and him becoming my mentor was an unexpected serendipity that I've been grateful for the whole rest of my life. I went in a fairly adventurous rock guitar player and I came out, I think, a competent musician. I knew something about music beforehand, but I knew considerably more when I came out. Jeff: The new record you have coming out is called Lexington and it's a jazz album. I'm

Jeff: The new record you have coming out is called *Lexington* and it's a jazz album. I'm assuming it's inspired by your time there and your work with Red Rodney. Would you consider this a tribute to that experience? Wayne: Yeah. Sometimes I look at what we do as artists, as a composer, that you reach into

the past to the things that originally inspired you to go down this road. It's like pulling a bow and arrow, the power. You're pulling that bow back-well, going back to reach back into the past to the things that motivated you originally. For me, in the early days it's Chuck Berry and the British first wave. But, then even more the free jazz movement of the late '60s and the music of Sun Ra, Coltrane, Albert Ayler, and Cecil Taylor. So, that's what I did with Lexington, is I went back into my past to that music and then I use that as the power that gets transferred to the arrow which is the new music and that shoots the new music out into the future. And I wanted to tie-in the way to talk about my life from prison onward.

Jeff: In 2009 was when Jail Guitar Doors started and it seems to me a link to the most positive thing you got to experience in prison, having the music lessons with Rodney. It took you away from...

Wayne: The reality.

Jeff: And so now you and Billy Bragg are going out to prisons and giving away instruments and teaching music classes. Can you tell me a little bit about Jail Guitar Doors and how this all happened?

Wayne: Sure. Well, when I was locked up, a new music form emerged in New York and in



London. Punk rock. And one of the punk rock bands in England was a very conscious band, The Clash. And they wrote a song about me, their fellow musician, and their brother in America who was serving time. And when I got out, I met them and I thanked them and we became great friends. We're still great friends. I was friends with Joe Strummer. I'm still friends with Mick Jones and I didn't think much more of it, than the song was called "Jail Guitar Doors."

Then I watched over the next thirty years as more and more people just like me went to prison, serving much more severe sentences for the exact same offenses. First tens of thousands, then hundreds of thousands, and then millions. It rubbed me wrong. I just thought, "Isn't anyone paying any attention to this?" Something is terribly, terribly wrong here. This isn't serving any positive purpose, in our country, to our people, to each other. It's costing billions and here we are thirty-five years after the beginning of the war on drugs and we can buy cheaper, better quality cocaine and heroin anywhere in America than we could thirty-five years ago.

It's an abject failure and the human cost is incalculable. Ten million Americans under direct state control—parole, probation. Two and a half million in prisons. That's ten million people wrenched out of the mainstream of American life, who can't get student loans, who can't get licenses for certain kinds of work, who carry that felony conviction like a scarlet letter. It is a crime against humanity in my opinion. If I had my way, if there were perfect justice, I would have the leaders on trial in The Hague for crimes against their own people. So, it's a long way around. I

tried to be brief, but the questions you ask require some nuance and background.

Jeff: Please, go ahead.

Wayne: My anger over hyper-incarceration finally moved me to do something about it. I thought, "What can I do about it?" I'm a musician. I'm a formerly incarcerated person. Maybe I can be a bridge. Maybe I can play some concerts in prisons; maybe I can help guys that way. I asked Billy Bragg to go with me on one of these concerts. And he told me he had started an initiative in England and he called it Jail Guitar Doors after the Clash song. He provided instruments to use as rehabilitation. And I said, "Bill, that's a brilliant idea. I'm happy you're doing that in England. But, I'm an American. I'm a musician over here and I'm an ex-convict. I think I should do that in this country." And he said, "Good, I was just going to task you with that. You're the perfect man for the job.'

So, Billy, my wife Margaret, and I started JGD. And what we do is really simple. We find people who work in corrections that are willing to use music as a tool for rehabilitation and we provide them with guitars. We also run programs with volunteer musicians who go into prisons and conduct songwriting workshops. We have them in Cook County Jail in Chicago, Travis County Correctional Complex in Austin, Sing Sing in New York, one in the Philadelphia prison system, and we're starting one now at Twin Towers in Los Angeles. We work toward legislative change, political change because there has to be political change at the end of the day.

Jeff: As far as the political or legislative side, one of my thoughts goes back to when you said that when you were in jail, your debt was the length of time that you served. But now, I feel like with a lot of these sentences, we've tacked on additional punishments. So once you leave jail, we've added barriers, barriers to employment, and barriers to housing—all these things that create a permanent underclass.

Wayne: Yup.

Jeff: Is there anything you've been able to do on the re-entry end for people coming out? Wayne: We support coalition partners who specialize in re-entry programs. There's a great group in Pasadena that does spectacular work called PACT, the Pasadena-Altadena Re-Integration Council. You can't imagine being away for ten years or fifteen years and coming out to the Internet and being a convicted felon, coming from a world of bitterness, racism, violence, and defeat. And then how do you cope? So, these guys provide basic transportation, health care, job training, and housing. The system has just created a perfect storm of misery. The pillars civilization is built on are health care, education, and prison. Those are the three pillars that hold up a culture. And our culture is not doing so well on these counts.

Jeff: My work that I do is in homeless housing. And there's a whole confluence of factors that result in a person becoming homeless.

Wayne: Right.

Jeff: But, one of the things that happens often when we intake our clients is we find they have some sort of criminal background record and the local housing authorities will say outright, "We won't take persons who have these certain kinds of convictions," making them ineligible to receive subsidized housing. Wayne: [Laughs] It's so fucked up. It's so fucked up. You have to laugh to keep from







DIRTY FENCES, LADIES CHOICE (7")

ALSO AVAILABLE: HECTOR'S PETS, DINO'S BOYS SONNY VINCENT, LIVIDS, PERSONAL & THE PIZZAS, DAVILLA 666, STALKERS & MORE COMING SOON: BARRERACUDAS oopsbabyrecords.com



fucking going out on top of a mall with an AK. I get it, why people go off. Because if you really pay attention to what's going on, it's intolerable. **Jeff:** Have you been able to get into any women's jails or prisons?

Wayne: Yeah, in the Philadelphia County Prison System we have a women's unit program and in the Twin Towers we have a program for the men and one for the women. We also have a women's program going on in Texas. We have a great woman down there, Jean Synodinos, who's running our program down there and she's spectacular. Women are getting locked up like crazy, too.

Jeff: As you mentioned before with Jail Guitar Doors, Billy Bragg runs the U.K. chapter. Have you been able to go overseas, to England or anywhere else, to see the jails there?

Wayne: I have. I've gone into prisons with him in England.

Jeff: Is there anything they're doing better over there?

Wayne: Well, yeah. I think the British are doing a lot better. Their sentences aren't as severe as America. American sentences are off the charts. Even—I would go so far as to say—for violent offenses. Our sentences are too damn long. Their justice system differs from ours, in that our system is adversarial. Who has the better lawyer often wins, which means who has the most money. So, you get as much justice as you can afford in America.

Whereas in England and a lot of other industrialized democracies, the court is

designed to get down to the truth of what happened: what are the facts, and what is justice in this case. It's not about one side winning the argument. It's about what happened. So, in England they will take into consideration all the mitigating circumstances and then make a determination about what's just.

Unfortunately, they're following the lead of the United States. But, they're holding on to their own ideas about things. I think their focus on rehabilitation is much stronger than ours is. The principal of rehabilitation was officially eliminated in American corrections. They turned a corner. They told me before I left prison that the era of rehabilitation had ended and now we were in the era of accountability. I don't know how well you've tracked it, but I've tracked it really closely. And over the years they've stripped out educational programs, therapy communities, job training. We have facilities here in California, for example, at Lancaster, there's the largest maximum security facility in the state and it has extension workshops for mechanical training. They're all empty.

Wayne: They sit there in the desert empty because they built so many prisons and they locked up so many people that they couldn't afford to run programs anymore. All they can do is hire enough guards to keep people locked up. So, our priorities shifted away completely. And the tragedy here is for us, all of us, is they sold this bill of goods that we'll be safer by

locking more people up. But when you lock more people up and you don't help them find out what their problem is and help them change for the better, just plop them back on the streets after a couple decades, you're not more safe. You're less safe!

Jeff: Do you have any project in particular coming forward you'd like people to get involved with? Legislation we should be supporting?

Wayne: There's a sensible sentencing act in Congress now. Senator Patrick Leahy has introduced it, which will go a long way towards undoing bad laws. It's very easy to pass a bad law, but it's very hard to undo them. I think the best thing people can do is to have a conversation. All social change starts with a conversation. If someone reads this interview, maybe go on the web and look up what's going on. Ask around. See what's really happening in your town, your city, in your local jail. Look at the numbers. Look at who's going to prison, for how long, and what good does it do any of us. And then, who knows? You might be moved to take some action. One person can make a difference. I know it's true. I've seen it over and over in my life. If we can get this conversation into our national discourse, then at least we're moving in the right direction. The thing that sustains me is people made this mess, people can fix it. If I didn't think this could be undone, then I would be more despondent than I am!

jailguitardoors.org



EOP FIVES



Adam Perry

5. Cayetana, Nervous Like Me LP (and getting to see them and Lemuria live at the Roxy)

4. French Exit, All Eyes West, The Fucking Wrath, and Planes Mistaken For Stars, live at Gigi's Cocktail Lounge, Ventura, CA on 7/15/14

3. Stop Breathing playing a free show outside Salzer's Records, Ventura, CA, 8/3/14

2. Fucked Up, Glass Boys LP

1. Rolling out to Razorcake HQ for the first time and getting to help out! Thanks Todd, Matthew, and Daryl-looking forward to meeting more of the Razorcake family while doing my part!

Alanna Why

- 1. Monomyth, Saturnalia Regalia!
- 2. Viet Cong, Cassette reissue
- 3. Pith & The Parenchymas, Song of the Neverending Ugly Lizard
- 4. Pregnancy Scares, Mind Control EP
- 5. Needles//Pins, Shamebirds

Art Ettinger

- · Dwarves, Invented Rock & Roll LP · Boys Order, Tomorrow Dancing 7"
- · Cayetana, Nervous Like Me LP
- The Copyrights, Report LP Who Killed Spikey Jacket?,

Bill Pinkel

- · Capitalist Kids, At a Loss LP
- · Bob Mould, Beauty & Ruin LP
- · Joyce Manor,

Gluehead 7"

Never Hungover Again LP

- Tie between Red Dons, Notes on the Underground EP and Beach Slang, Who Would Want Anything So Broken? EP
- Three-way Dirtnap tie between Sugar Stems, Only Come Out at Night LP (and live at the Redwood), Steve Adamyk Band, Dial Tone LP, and Sonic Avenues, Mistakes LP

Billy Kostka

- · Art Fad, Vatos
- · Meatbodies / Wand, Void Split 7"
- Sonic Chicken 4
- The Shirks
- · Total Control, 7"s comp.

Camylle Reynolds

Top 5 Live This Summer

1. Hank Wood And The

Hammerheads (Hemlock, SF) 2. Life Stinks... Chad puked on stage, and kept going, fucking punk (Knockout, SF)

- In School (House of the Dead Rat, SJ)
- Violence Creeps (Hemlock, SF)
- 5. The Coathangers (Pizza Punx show in SR)

Chad Williams

- 1. Long Knife, Possession 7"
- 2. Pity, The Struggle 7'
- 3. Sharp Objects and MOTO
- at The Hemlock, SF
- 4. Gang Green,

Skate to Hell/Alcohol 7" reissue

5. No Coast, Don't Be Gramps 7"

Chris Mason

- . Steve Adamyk Band, Dial Tone LP
- Bob Mould, Beauty & Ruin LP
- 3. Siamese Twins, Still Corner LP
- Lunch, Johnny Pineapple 7'
- 5. Recess 25th Anniversary Tour with Lenguas Largas, Treasure Fleet, Underground Railroad to Candyland, and White Night, live at The Know

Chris Terry

- 1. Rough Francis,
- Maximum Soul Power LP
- 2. Totally Slow LP
- Vyvyan, Demo cassette
- 4. Reigning Sound, Shattered LP
- 5. Shabazz Palaces, Lese Majesty LP

Daryl Gussin

- · Video, "(Join the) Hate Wave" b/w "Captivity" 7
- · Darto, Hex 12"EP
- Influence: A Tribute to the Big Boys LP
- · Hurula LP, tie with Reigning Sound, Shattered LP
- · Blank Pages, live

Dave Williams 1. Cold World, How the Gods Chill LP

- 2. Twitching Tongues, World War Live LP
- 3. Pallbearer, Foundations of Burden LP
- 4. Martyrdöd, Elddop LP
- 5. Midnight, No Mercy for Mayhem LP

Designated Dale

- 1. The Crowd at Cafe NELA, Jim Kaa and Co. continue to bring it in spades
- 2. Tenement, s'alllll good

- 3. The Nitwitz, early '80s gem of a band from Amsterdam
- 4. The unbridled power of Deacon Dark
- 5. Hollywood Hate rock party weekend up in San Jose and Petaluma

Eric Baskauskas

One Guy's Favorite Gilead Fest 2014 Performances, July 18-20, Oshkosh, WI

- 1. Hexer (Female-fronted black metal + NWOBHM featuring members of Mutilation Rites)
- 2. Mutilation Rites (Thrashy black metal from Brooklyn)
- 3. Kowloon Walled City (Hardcore
- sludge from California) 4. Thou (Thou! From New Orleans)
- 5. Protestant (God-hating Milwaukee metallic hardcore)

Honorable Mention: Free bottled water plus Cranky Pat's Midnight Pizza Buffet

Evan Wolff

- 1. New Future Virgins single 2. New unreleased Day Creeper LP
- 3. Gazer
- 4. Didi
- 5. Sleeves

George Rager

Top 5 Albums I Listened to on My "I'm Not Crazy" Eighteen-Day Solo Summer Road Trip, with Pairing Western Road Trip Scenery

- 1. Aerosmith, Greatest Hits 1973-1988 (Driving through Utah and Idaho)
- 2. Red Dons, Fake Meets Failure (Driving through Oregon to California)
- 3. Stereophonic Space Sound Unlimited, Jet Sound Inc. (Late night drive through Death Valley)
- 4. Pentagram, First Daze Here (Yellowstone campground)
- 5. Suicidal Tendencies, Self-titled (Stuck in traffic on the 5)

Jamie Rotante

Top 5 Things I'm Looking forward to This Fall

- 1. The Dwarves playing the East Coast
- Pumpkin Beer
- 3. Cassette Store Day
- Samhain in New York
- 5. The general anticipation for and inevitable happiness that Halloween brings.

Javier Cahral

Top 5 Newish Pop Punk Albums for Burnt Out Lifers

- 1. Masked Intruder, M.I.
- 2. Teenage Bottlerocket, Freak Out!

- 3. Modern Baseball,
- You're Gonna Miss It All
- 4. The Menzingers, Rented Life
- 5. Ridicule, The Beginnings Plus One

Jennifer Federico

Top 5 Pretty Surprises in My Record Collection

- 1. Baby blue marble with etched lyrics: Some Girls, All My Friends
- are Going Death 2. Pink and gray splatter on clear: Surplus 1080, Relapse in Response
- 3. Black and white split color: Against Me!, Reinventing Axl Rose 4. Creamsicle orange marble: The
- Bananas, Forbidden Fruit 5. Electric blue transparent: Elvis, Moody Blue

Jimmy Alvarado

- · Die Kreuzen, Cows and Beer 7" EP: One of the best punk records ever released, again available. Thanks,
- Beer City! · Chrome, Half Machine from the Sun and Feel it Like a Scientist CDs: Two smokin' "new" releases, one a collection of outtakes from their classic era and one with brand spankin' new
- tunes, both worth every penny. Radioactivity, Self-titled LP: Pure punk/pop perfection. Can't stop
- listening to it. Last Week Tonight with John Oliver, TV series: One of the last bastions of honest, actual news reporting is a fucking comedy show. Such is the state of modern American journalism.
- Blood Pressure, Self-titled 7" EP: Pittsburgh hardcore that makes you wanna bounce off the walls and kick inanimate objects.

Joe Dana

- Top 5 Punk Rock Bowling Moments 1. My brother and I wearing suits to the Cock Sparrer show and getting heckled by punx is probably the punkest I've ever felt.
- 2. Watching a woman balancing a yard glass of vodka and water, hundred dollar bills, and a little baggy of cocaine just a few feet from a crowded bar.
- 3. Yacht Rock Day
- 4. Drinking with Cock Sparrer while they told us boxing stories.
- 5. My friend's "party champion" story that involves a sleepwalking out of a locked hotel room completely naked.

Joe Evans III

- Black Rainbow, Self-titled LP
- Rad Payoff, The Good, The Rad, and The Ugly LP

Locked out of a hotel room completely naked.

- · Nato Coles & The Blue Diamond Band, Promises to Deliver LP
- · Ramma Lamma, Ice Cream LP

· Otto Mann, Live

John Mule

- 1. Street Eaters, Blood::Muscles::Bones 2. Nerve Beats from Hawaii. Check them out!
- 3. Andrew Schubert is Übermensch!
- 4. Erroll Morris's

The Unknown Known

5. Wovenhand, Refractory Obdurate

Juan Espinosa

- · S.H.I.T. live at Los Globos and Generation Shit 7"
- Steve Adamyk Band, Dial Tone LP
- · Earth Girls, Wrong Side of History EP • Street Eaters, Spokenest, and
- Wulfen Rag at the Wulf Den
- · Charles Bukowski's Ham on Rye and thanking my lucky stars that I didn't read it in high school or else I'd probably be in jail right now (special thanks to Claudia for buying it for me)

Kayla Greet

1. The Menzingers, Rented World

2. Joyce Manor,

Never Hungover Again

3. The Bloodtypes, Just Your Type

4. Groove Ghoulies,

Flying Saucer Rock-n-Roll 5. The Muffs, Whoop Dee Doo

Keith Rosson

- · Gordon Gano's Army, Fifty Hours 7"
- Needles///Pins, Shamebirds LP · The Dropkick Murphys song

"Flannigan's Ball" (I know, I know! It's embarrassing! But it's got Ronnie Drew and Spider Stacy on vocals and, well, it's just great.)

• There Are Little Kingdoms (stories) and City of Bohane (novel) by Kevin Barry

· And yes, health insurance

Kevin Dunn

· Bob Mould, Beauty & Ruin LP · Benny The Jet Rodriguez,

Home. Run. LP

- The Chantey Hook, Self-titled EP
- The UnGnomes, Milk and Cookies EP

· New York.

20 Minutes from Here demo

Kiyoshi Nakazawa

Top 5 Comics I Found at Comic-Con 1. The Fabulous Fantastic Four Treasury Edition (Lee and Kirby) 2. Doctor Strange Treasury Edition (Lee, Ditko, Severin, Brunner, Colon et. al.)

3. Snake Pit split with My Stupid Life (Snakepit, Clem)

- 4. The Humans (Keller and Neely)
- 5. Jack Kirby Collector #37

Kurt Morris

- 1. Strand Of Oaks (everything)
- 2. Wugazi, 13 Chambers
- 3. Converge (everything)

4. King's X, Gretchen Goes to Nebraska 5. Julie Doiron (everything)

Mark Twistworthy

· So Cow, The Long Con LP

• Dutch Masters, All in the Wires LP · Ed Schrader's Music Beat,

Party Jail LP · Satyricon, Self-titled 2 x LP

· Big Boys, reissues

Matt Werts

· Aweful Kanawful, Pharoah's Lonely Ego

- · Coolies, Punk Is Bread 7"
- · Frankie Cosmos, Affirms Glinting · Alex Chilton, Like Flies on Sherbet
- · Beck, One Foot in the Grave

Michael T. Fournier

· Brick Mower,

Teenage Disgraceland LP · Chain And The Gang,

Minimum Rock N Roll LP

· Health Problems, Counterproductive cassette

• Meg Wolitzer, The Interestings (book)

WTF podcast

Mike Faloon

1. Kim Deal, "The Root" b/w "Range on Castle" 7"

2. Food,

Four Pieces from Candyland 12"EP 3. Future Virgins, "Late Republic" b/w "Centre" 7'

- 4. Bob Mould, Beauty & Ruin LP
- 5. Various Artists,

Recess Cavalcade of Clowns 7"

Mike Frame

- 1. Muffs, Whoop Dee Doo CD
- 2. Real Kids, Shake Outta Control CD
- 3. Reigning Sound, Shattered CD
- 4. Primitive Hearts, live and LP

5. Minus 5 and Quireboys, live and CD

Naked Rob

Terrible Tuesday Radio Show, SFC 1. Replica, *Beast* 7" (Oakland hardcore) 2. I Am Become Death, Self-titled EP

(Boston hardcore)

3. The Grasshopper Lies Heavy, All Sadness, Grinning Into Flow LP (SATX noise rock)

4. Arnocorps, The Greatest Band of All Time LP (Schwarzenegger RNR) 5. Heavy Hand, Northwoods Knives LP (Milwaukee pop noise rock)

Nardwuar the Human Serviette

1. Maximum Tremolo Zine # 2 Wonderful surf zine from Buffalo, NY put out by Nick from the wicked Space Wolves!

2. Equalizing Distort Zine and radio show-Best punk radio show/zine combination out there!

3. Skinny Kids, Self-titled cassette-Cool surf action outta Vancouver, BC

4. The Flintettes, Open Your Eyes -Catchy rawk action from Mike of The Tranzmitors!

5. B-Lines—Another genius nine song 45 RPM masterpiece representing Vancouver!

Nighthawk

Paul J. Comeau

Paul Silver

Rene Navarro

Replay Dave

Rev. Norb

Rich Cocksedge

Rvan Nichols

Top Five St. Louis Shows

Cove, August 5

July 26

· Alice Cooper, Mötley Crüe at

Riverport Amphitheater, July 9

· Direct Hit!, Masked Intruder, The

Rational Anthem at Chill Dawg

• The Washington Beach Bums at

Top 5 Nomeansno Records. If You've

Never Heard This Band, Do Yourself

a Favor and Check Out Any of These

1. Recess Records Cavalcade of

Amigos, The Treasure Fleet, and

Clowns at Til-Two, San Diego, with

URTC, Lenguas Largas, Swing Ding

2. The Stupid Daikini, Self-titled EP

Bad Cop/Bad Cop, Bombpops, Western Settings at Til-Two, San Diego

Only Come Out at Night LP

5. Blank Pages, Self-titled LP

1. Spokenest, Street Eaters, and

4. Turning thirty (I'm not dead!)

5. Zero Fade by Chris L. Terry

Only Come Out at Night LP

· Dikembe, Mediumship LP

Cheap Girls, Famous Graves

• Ramma Lamma, Ice Cream LP

• The Sleaze, Tecktonic Girls 12"

Only Come Out at Night LP

· Reigning Sound, Shattered LP

• The Girls!, Let's Not Be Friends LP

· Down By Law, live at The Cavern,

· Low Culture / Needles//Pins, Split 7"

· Orden Mundial, Obediencia Debida LP

1. Kirry (my cat, I was lucky to have

2. Echo And The Bunnymen at The

3. The Picture of Dorian Gray by

such a great companion, RIP)

• The Muffs, Whoop Dee Doo LP

• Grand Collapse, Far from the

• Radon, 28 LP reissue

2. Silver in both Gi and No-Gi at the

2014 L.A. International Jiu Jitsu Open

3. Thirteen years with my BFF/lover/

· Hard Girls, A Thousand Surfaces LP

Wulfen Rag at Wulf Den

The Heavy Anchor, August 2

Releases You Can Find.

1.0 + 2 = 1 LP

3. You Kill Me EP

5. In the Fishbowl EP

2. Wrong LP

4. Mama LP

Blank Pages

4. Sugar Stems,

life partner

· Sugar Stems,

· Sugar Stems,

Exeter, U.K.

Observatory

Oscar Wilde

Callous Crowd LP

Priceduifkes at The Ready Room, July 2

• 7 Seconds, The Copyrights at Fubar,

4. Thelonious Monk, Monk's Dream

5. Teledrome, Self-titled

Sal Lucci

1. Giorgio Murderer, Primitive World 7"

2. Purple 7, Jewel Finger LP 3. Reigning Sound, Shattered LP

4. Achtungs 7

5. Nots, "Fix" b/w "Modern" 7"

Sean Arenas

· Reigning Sound,

Live at Goner Records LP

· Delay, Circle Change LP

• Davidians, Self-titled 7"

• Martha / Spoonboy, Split 7"

• Karoshi Boy, Nothing Is 7"

Sean Koepenick

Thanks to These Authors for Telling Me to Check Out These Other Authors.

Charles Bukowski for John Fante

George Pelecanos for Don Carpenter

3. Kurt Vonnegut for Mark Vonnegut

Jack Kerouac for Neal Cassady

5. Bill Janovitz for Lawrence Ferlinghetti

Tim Brooks

· Cold World, How the Gods Chill LP

• Radioactivity,
"Danger" b/w "Why" 7"
• Violent Reaction,

Dead End EP

· Shame EP

· Video, "(Join The) Hate Wave" b/w "Captivity" T"

Todd Taylor

• Forest of Fortune (book) Jim Ruland, and live

• Recess 25th Anniversary Tour with Swing Ding Amigos, Lenguas Largas, Treasure Fleet, Underground Railroad To Candyland, White Night, and Audacity

· Hurula, Self-titled LP

· Reigning Sound, Shattered LP

· Street Eaters, Spokenest, and Wulfen Rag at the Wulf Den

• Night Birds, Monster Surf 7" EP

Toby Tober

Top 5 Movies I Have

Enjoyed Recently How to Start a Revolution

Erebus: Operation Overdue

3. Drunk History (series)

4. The Man Who Souled the World

5. The Battered Bastards of Baseball

Tommy Vandervort

1. Apocalypse Meow / Todd Congelliere, Split 7" 2. Sugar Stems,

Only Come Out at Night LP

3. Pears, In Diapers demo OWTH / Discharge, Split 7"

Stiff Little Fingers, No Going Back LP

Ty Stranglehold

1. Dwarves, Invented Rock'n 'Roll LP

2. Needles//Pins, Shamebirds LP 3. Bob Mould, Beauty & Ruin LP

4. Fucked Up, Glass Boys LP

Ghost Knife, Garrote Guarantee T"



A-BONES: Ears Wide Shut: CD

Norton Records' house band (the label's two owners are members) are a bit rougher sonic-wise than I remember their earlier work sounding—no doubt due to the fact that it was recorded in their rehearsal room—but they nonetheless turn in another fine slab of mostly garage rock'n'roll covers. Honking sax, rolling keyboard lines, and sludgy fuzz aplenty, they keep the rock rolling in ways that'll please discerning trash rock fans. Been a helluva long time since I heard anything by 'em, and it's nice to find they haven't lost any of their gumption or charm. —Jimmy Alvarado (Norton)

ACHTUNGS: "Full of Hate" b/w "I Don't Wanna Talk About It":7"

New release on the new, hip label Total Punk. Big hole, skint paper sleeve a la Rip Off records, and two bangers that are over so quickly I barely had time to sit down. Originality is overrated. These Finns took a gamble putting just two tracks on the record, but luckily it worked out as both tracks are bangers. This shit could have been on Rip Off records, sounding like the Registrators or the Motards (two faves of mine) or, hell, this could be some long lost KBD banger, if you can find it. Get this. —Tim Brooks (Total Punk)

ALLVARET: Tänk På Döden: LP

In Scandinavia right now, as well as certain parts of the rest of the world, a subgenre of punk has been developing for a few years. No one dares name it for fear of tarnishing this special movement. Part of me wants to say fuck that, give a name to the genre, but I'll be content with just explaining some of the recurring elements. Bands heavily utilize female vocals, write with post-punk influences in mind, but undeniably work in the tradition of the first wave of punk. Other bands that you know of in this genre would be Gorilla Angreb, Masshysteri, and Arctic Flowers. Allvaret sits comfortably within these sounds, while still producing an intimidating record in their own right. Perhaps sounding something like a sped-up X, if you took out all of John Doe's vocals. Without even understanding the lyrics, the music has a tone of panic and anger. The songs have such a natural flow, I feel as if I'm cheating the record if I only put it on for a few songs. Great record, great band. Grade: A-. -Bryan Static (Dirt Cult, dirtcultrecords.com)

APOCALYPSE MEOW: "Baseball and Alcohol": 7" EP

"I just want to be the goddamn MVP for the Minneapolis Protest Punk Baseball



League"-now come on, that's got to be one of the best lines in any song, punk rock or otherwise. Apocalypse Meow remind me a hell of a lot of Sicko, playing pop punk that is loose yet just within the boundaries of being under control to stop it from becoming too sloppy and chaotic. Just like Sicko, Apocalypse Meow manages to crank out a hatful of perkiness and do so with much aplomb. The band consists of a pair of Sundowners and a member of Off With Their Heads, for anyone who is interested in the pedigree of the band's personnel. -Rich Cocksedge (Dirt Cult. dirtcultrecords@gmail, dirtcultrecords.com)

ARCTIC FLOWERS: Weaver: LP

Portland's Arctic Flowers unveil their second full length of that unmistakable northwest punk style also heralded by compatriots Criminal Code and Red Dons. A potent concoction of the Observers' sharpest edges and the post-punk flag waving of Flesh World mixes in nicely with some fiercer numbers such as the rager "Anamnesis." Something tells me that Arctic Flowers' songwriting prowess has yet to reach its zenith and that the well of talent that they've tapped won't be running dry anytime soon. Absolutely mandatory. -Juan Espinosa (Deranged)

ARNOCORPS:

The Greatest Band of All Time: CD

I was at a Jello Biafra And The Guantanamo School Of Medicine show recently and an older gentleman standing next to me was lamenting how Alternative Tentacles hadn't kept up with the times. I politely chided him for not keeping up with Alternative Tentacles. As good as joke records get, these songs are all named after Arnold Schwarzenegger movies and prominently feature quotes and plot descriptions of the films, twisted into hilarity, in the lyrics. Musically hard, with an almost oi tinge, this might be the best Alternative Tentacles album since the 2004 release of Leftover Crack's Fuck World Trade. Want to touch Arnold's gams? That's one of the many pressing issues discussed on this instant classic. -Art Ettinger (Alternative Tentacles)

ATTENDANTS, THE: Metropol Agencies: LP

Sometimes, when you listen to a given style of music for an exceedingly long period of time, things start to get jumbled and you lose track of the subtle shifts in style and delivery, until something comes along at a key moment that makes you say, "Wait-wait-wait the fuck up. At what point down the line did punk start sounding like really

bad, boring adult-rock fodder?" This, my friends, is that moment. –Jimmy Alvarado (Can I Say?)

AUTISTIC BEHAVIOR: Shattered Cattle: LP

I remember these cats being one of the bands on the old Philly comp, Get Off My Back, but in truth it's been so damned long since I've actually heard that record that I had forgotten what they sounded like. This was a nice refresher course—in addition to the requisite thrash/hardcore tuneage that ruled the roost back then, you get some surprising diversity in approach, with some songs delving deep into postpunk territory, which would've been a rare excursion by a hardcore band during that time. A lot of creativity is in evidence here from a band that wasn't afraid to stretch out of the staid dominant punk pigeonhole, something that is all too rare these days. The sticker on cover says this is an unreleased LP from 1982 put out for Record Store Day 2014, which means it has some bonus tracks, comes on splatter-color vinyl, and I'm assuming quantities are limited, so happy hunting. -Jimmy Alvarado (SRA, srarecords.com)

BAD DADDIES: Head on a Rail: 7"

This band has a raw freshness to them, though I'm sure they've been together for quite a while. They seem to sincerely lack any inhibitions when it comes to trying new things and how they should sound. Vocalist Camylle has totally challenged what I expect to hear from a front woman. The closest comparison that comes to mind is Poly Styrene with her extremely feminine shrieks about being boxed in by society. Bad Daddies' jam "You Ain't Right" just builds and builds the entire time, climaxing at the precise point that I feel a panic attack coming on. There's so much anger, desperation, and a general feeling of being fed up in her voice that invokes anxiety in me until the song bursts and slowly comes back for a quieter refrain. Only bad thing I can say about this record is at the beginning of "I Don't" there's a bit of goofing around, prepping to play the song that I don't feel is relevant to the feeling of the whole record. It lasts for fifteen seconds, just long enough to notice, but short enough that it's not a deal breaker. This band rocks and is highly recommended. -Kayla Greet (Negative Fun, negativefun.com)

BAÑOS Y BAÑOS: Singles Going Broke: LP

Kinda sounds like what the late great Brainiac would have sounded like if they were more into old Fang records

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than Dungeons & Dragons, although BAF fall somewhere between Sparks sometimes it just sounds like the chords to "Gimme That Girl" by the Devil Dogs and I wonder if I'm just assigning intent where none exists. If I try to aim my analysis in the other direction, I get an art school version of the Pagans ((okay, that's a stretch, but not wholly invalid)). Mildly weird and darkly artily abrasive throughout, but with a solid enough punk rock type backbone that I never really got the feeling I was listening to random horseshit. Contains the line "three tongues are better than one," so you know these guys are a lot of fun at parties. BEST SONG: "Dividends." BEST SONG TITLE: "Swastika Bones" "Stereonucleosis." FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: This album purports to be compiled from the Blitz Yonder Broughnut, Boil Yr Bong, and Dividends 7-inches, the Steve Hawkwind +1 12", and the Better Yobbo Bureau 10". These five records are depicted and discussed in some depth on the back cover; they almost certainly do not exist. -Rev. Nørb (Kunstwaffe)

BASTARDS OF FATE, THE: Vampires Are Real and Palpable: LP

This is a pretty trippy record. The songs switch from a pop sound to nursery music to a campy goth thing. The cover has a picture of a model-sized Swisslooking mansion through psychedelic eyes. It's a perfect image for their music. I should also mention there's a great cat family album photograph on the back. This is the type of music that I imagine Beetlejuice listens to presently.

and Mindless Self Indulgence. If you want to listen to the soundtrack of a bad trip without the effects of actual drugs, put this record on. -Ryan Nichols (This Will Be Our Summer, hello@ OurSummerRecords.com)

BEASTMAN: Self-titled: Cassette

love everything about Beastman. First of all, they took the time to design full-fledged cassette inserts, which is absurdly lacking in the new tape craze movement. Also, they play fast, sleazy Dwarves-inspired punk, but with smart, elevated lyrics. The song "Reasonable Suspicion" especially surprised me with its expertly crafted words, taking the standard theme of resistance to the criminal justice system to a new level. Hopefully they'll move from cassette to vinyl soon, but 'til then, this beast shall remain contained in its tape shell. -Art Ettinger (Jelly Music)

BENNY THE JET RODRIGUEZ: Home, Run.: LP

As a kid, I had the VHS tape of The Sandlot on heavy rotation for one reason and one reason only-and it sure as shit wasn't for the baseball. Benny the Jet ran away with my adolescent heart as quickly as he ran from the Beast while trying to retrieve a Babe Ruth autographed baseball. So, I find it fitting to have my heart stolen yet again by Benny The Jet Rodriguez. A hip swaying, head bobbing, shoulder shimmy-inducing lo-fi, pop punk extravaganza that has found a steady

spot on my summer jams list. There may not be any crying in baseball but there sure is a lot of rocking. -Ashley Ravelo (Recess)

BIG EYES / POST TEENS: Split: 7"

Big Eyes kick off Side A of this 7" with "Asking You to Stay," building up with lollygagging, songs-to-swayyour-hips-to riffs, that katamaries itself into hard-hitting chords, faster speeds, and eventually more "aggressive" vocals. The built up energy brought on tumbleweeds its way into the second, and final, Big Eyes song off of this split, "It's Not Fair": a sugar coated, upbeat take on obvious frustrations (as Big Eyes tends to do), topped with air guitar worthy riffs. Post Teens follow this up with a quick, steady, and slightly manic, "Mexican Painkillers," that tie this record together perfectly. Side B eventually slows itself out with pacing, and steadies into, "Friendly Start." With such fuzzy chord progression, poppy beats, and perfectly timed pauses that leave you on edge, how can you possibly not fall head-over-heels in love with this? -Genevieve Armstrong (No Idea)

B-LINES: Self-titled: Cassette

The self-titled tape from Vancouver's B-Lines is a re-release of the much-liked LP put out by Nominal and Deranged. On it, B-Lines play a nervy mash of hardcore and pop punk: nine tracks in eleven minutes, all threatening to shake apart from jittery rhythms and shout-yelped delivery of lines about wearing "Sunglasses when I'm all alone / Sunglasses when I'm on the phone." Songs like "Hastings Strut" and 'Psychedelic High School" are wild and hooked and would fit on any mix. Tonally, you'd think B-Lines rented the Angry Samoans equipment with the promise that they'd only write songs spikier and stranger than those of 1978. But now it's 2014. It's time to save on tapes. Order one for your uncle who likes "proto-punk," one for your steppep who whistles Red Kross, another for your grand-pep, a car copy for the whole family! Or maybe just one for you and your dog. -Jim Joyce (Shake!)

BLOCKHEAD: Guts: Cassette

This tape contains four cuts of crossover-era-style angry hardcore the way I like it. "Guts" is a five-minute HC epic with weird marching interludes thrown in. The other three songs are one-two minute blasts against the things you wanna be against, like cops and waiting to blitz. Plus if you mail back the logo on the tape, they'll send you more music. So play this tape as part of a healthy breakfast. If you know anyone who is balding but still has a Mohawk, this is for them. -Billups Allen (Smash!)

BLOOD PRESSURE: Self-titled: 7" EP

Wow, these cats don't fuck around in the least. They go right for the throat with some tasty full-bore thrash reminiscent of early Gang Green with maybe just a bit more musical sophistication, and don't let up until you're good 'n'



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bruised up. Thumbs definitely way up for this bad boy. –Jimmy Alvarado (Beach Impediment)

BORIS: Noise: CD

Possibly the most polarizing release yet from these longtime audio terrorists. Polarizing in that longtime fans might be surprised at the "new" sound and direction the band are taking on this album, but once the shock fades it becomes apparent that this is really just the perfect distillation of the band's work to date. This CD is at once maybe the heaviest, most poppy, beautiful release I have heard this year. My only complaint is that the album was pretty short by today's standards. It left me wanting more much more but, then again, I guess that is one of the marks of a great album, isn't it? -Garrett Barnwell (Sargent House, sargenthouse.com)

BOYS ORDER: Playback EP: Cassette

One of the cutest things I've heard in cassette form in a very long time. Boy's Order is a four-piece, sugary, femalefronted rock band from Japan and they've got some fantastic melodies. Songs are uptempo and these five tracks are over fairly quickly, which means you can totally listen to them twice in one sitting! Their singer and bass player, Chihiro, is so high pitched that she almost reaches chipmunk octaves, but never to the point of annoyance. She makes you want to bob your head and smile while singing along to adorable lyrics, albeit slightly lost in translation, like, "Do you want to date with me? / Let me go / It's

broken my heart." Dancey songs about love and loss that keep you grinning play after play after play. –Kayla Greet (Love Panic, loverpanicrecords.com)

BUMMER: Kings on the Run: 7"

Montreal's an odd place. Probably more music per capita than anywhere else in the region, yet breaking out is tough for just that reason, it seems. Popular bands play for massive crowds in sold-out clubs, while the younger bands have to work a little harder to cut their teeth. Point being, while I've heard of Bummer-living a couple of hours away-I haven't had a chance to check them out. And then this beautifully packaged and well-presented single comes in the mail, which makes you feel like a fool for not knowing it existed before. The Quebec three-piece play '90s-style, aggressive (yet emotive) post-punk. Still grungy enough to make you want more—far from anything too slick. The vocals are sang in an almost gang-style, yelling tone, while still being on key. A number of bands from Montreal are doing this sort of thing at the moment, but Bummer seem to stick out. There's another 7" out in the wild as well, so I'd also recommend tracking that down, too, if this genre gets you going. -Steve Adamyk (Housebreaker, facebook. com/housebreakerrecords / Lost Cat, lostcatrecords.org, / Sex Cave, facebook. com/sexcaverecords)

CATS, THE:

Relax on Everyone: Cassette

Pretty competent indie pop punk with really high-pitched vocals, but I don't

know how much I need sixteen songs' worth of it. At times, the Cats veer into GBV-esque territory, touching on the lo-fi living room wonder jam, yet the majority of the time they wade in the saccharine sadness of Plan-It-X. –Vincent (Manondor)

CHROME: Feel It like a Scientist: CD

fuggin' love Chrome. Their best known and most lauded period-the "Edge/Creed" era that produced the five albums, from Alien Soundtracks to 3rd from the Sun-is the kind of good that'll leave those inclined to listen to 'em slack-jawed in awe (for a quick, cost effective overview of this period, I recommend the one-disc Anthology 1979-1983 CD and decide if you wanna venture deeper down the rabbit hole). Theirs is a sound that manages to be all over the map influence-wise-equal parts punk, rock, metal, industrial, drone, psychedelia, space rock, soundscapes, and so on-and at the same time result in something that is both singular and cohesive, an almost perfect amalgamation of all of its parts that is heavy, playful, hypnotic, oddly funky in places, and just downright weird. Things got a bit dicey after primary progenitors Helios Creed and Damon Edge parted ways and each fronted separate subsequent incarnations of the band, and the two never managed a planned reunion before Edge died in 1995. Between this and last year's release, a stunner of a collection of unreleased tracks recorded during the band's most artistically prolific period entitled Half

Machine from the Sun: The Lost Tracks from '79-'80, Creed has brought the band full circle. Feel It like a Scientist is prime Chrome-odd and oddly catchy, rife with experimentation and seasoned noise mongering, uncompromising and yet still engaging, and true to the initial lineup's ability to play music that continues to be several decades ahead of its time. As we hit the mid-point of 2014, I'm gonna safely bet this'll make it onto several "best of" lists come the end of the year, including any such list culled by this writer. Highly recommended. -Jimmy Alvarado (Chrome, facebook. com/chromechronicles)

COOLIES: Punk Is Bread: 7" EP

It took me a few listens to realize there are only two kind of regular songs with vocals on this six-song EP. There are also two brief, fuzzy atmospheric instrumentals and two songs with what sounds like a six-yearold singing? In my mind, this puts the record structurally in the same league as Brian Eno's Another Green World, except Coolies are noise pop kids in their own universe instead of one cool egghead who's friends with Phil Collins and Robert Fripp. "God Take Me" and "Mothers in Mantis"—the two, I guess, reg jams-are mixtape worthy, or classic, without trying to be. They disintegrate completely or hang out until they're ready to split and both approaches are correct. This is one of those 7"s you hold close for a long time. -Matt Werts (Epic Sweep, epicsweeprecords.com)





CRETINS: Self-titled: 7"

Not a Ramones-core band. This is fast, pummeling hardcore from Richmond, Virginia. A tried and true formula that includes Discharge, guttural vocals, and a dash of Motörhead. Though I tend to prefer vocalists I can clearly understand, exceptions are certainly made: Tragedy, Celtic Frost, the fucking Germs! Problem is, when I can't even follow along with a lyric sheet, it's kinda tough to get into. The music is solid though, and I could see these guys evolving into something much more compelling. —Chad Williams (Vinyl Conflict, vinylconflict.com)

CRIPPLED OLD FARTS: Free Drinks in Hell: LP

If you're a fan of We Must Burn-era Poison Idea, and early '90s thicknecked hardcore in general (and are willing to overlook what may be one of the worst band names in recorded history) this might be worth checking out. I personally think it was a pretty dismal time for a lot of genres, hardcore included, and I found this record to be pretty uneventful. It suffered a lot from the deadly All The Songs Sound Exactly The Same Syndrome. Still, Crippled Old Farts are enthusiastic and committed and a lot of care was taken here: the recording's solid, the packaging includes a separate, fullcolor booklet of photos and lyrics, and it's been released on some of the heaviest gray vinyl I've ever seen. (And the guy who did the liner notes has such amazing handwriting that I totally thought it was a font at first. Good job, guy!) A split release between a bunch of French and German labels, so while *Free Drinks in Hell* was not remotely my bag, it was also clearly a labor of love for all involved. –Keith Rosson (Slow Death)

CROP CIRCLE: Citizens of Fear: Cassette

If you're going to do hardcore, it's got to be loud. Crop Circle understands the basic theories that provide the world not with the hardcore it wants, but the hardcore it deserves. The vocals are harsh, strained to the verge of snapping. The music is tight and connected, a bed on which the vocals can rage itself into your ears. As a result, the recording has a sense of urgency, as if the tempo must be fast to get the message out in time. They play with the resolve of a band who are all about to die if they don't play their music right this very second. Grade: B+. -Bryan Static (Sell Your Soul, sellyoursoulrecords.bandcamp.com)

CUTTERS:

We Are the Quarry: Cassette

This reflective fraggle rock from a quartet out of NYC pools together something old and something new. Hanging onto tracks from their earlier EP, Trying Not to Die, "X-Cutioner's Song," "Excitable Liefeld," and "Young Gods" epitomize end-of-therope, somebody-please-help-me type vocals, much like Black Sparrow Press shot through with gang vox on the chorus and cock rock guitar solos.

The new tracks look out from a Red House Painters autobiographical POV, juxtaposing frank, depressing lyrics with unconventional instrumentations like a sprinkling of magical triangle in "Batman 666." At the end of it all, I wanna hand this guy a tissue and ask if he's seeing a good therapist. Disparaging, barely hanging on—keep the sharps away from these guys.—Kristen K. (Lost State)

DAMAGED HEAD: Self-titled: 12" EP

Potent Swedish hardcore that owes more to an American thrash influence than the usual Discharge base one historically hears from bands outta that region. They keep things tight, fast, and short to the point that one can't help but wonder why they chose this format instead of a 7". Nonetheless, it's definitely worth a look-see.—Jimmy Alvarado (Man In Decline, manindeclinerecords.com)

DAN MELCHIOR: Live at the Philly Record Exchange: Cassette

When I first saw this tape pop up, I was kinda hoping that Dan Melchior was performing some of the musique concrète and experimental work that he's being doing lately. Regardless, I can barely say that I was anything close to disappointed with this excellent live documentation of Mr. Melchior and co. They blast through seven psychedelic garage jams, including a take on Fairport Convention's "Matty Grove" (titled "Matty" here). The guitar work is, of course, big, stunning,

and explosive. Totally encapsulating. While the live set ends with a slow, doomy jam, the backside of the cassette is rounded out with a studio recording of Melchior's "Swamp!" from 2009. Great stuff! —Vincent (Stale Heat, staleheat.bigcartel.com)

DAVIDIANS: Self-titled: 7"

Davidians' channel Greg Ginn's lean atonality (pre-What The... embarrassment) blended with 'the wall-of-fuzz assault of Pissed Jeans (including their penchant for goofy song titles: "Bummer Tent" and "Bauhaus Beach-Haus"). Vocalist Cameron Craig sounds demonically possessed while the rhythm section holds down the slippery changes. Across all four songs, Davidians are noisy, spastic, relentless, and utterly satisfying. Recommended.—Sean Arenas (Deranged)

DEKODER: Flowers to Blossom: LP

Exceedingly chuffed to see these Canadian gloom-merchants released another full-length. Following along the same lines as their last, Between the Waking and the Dying, this latest effort maybe tempers the aggressiveness of its predecessor by just a hair, but the band still knows how to lock into a groove and wield those loping post-punk bass and guitar lines with deadly precision. Normally, this sort of fare features heavily in my lateautumn listening, but this has managed to worm its way into a featured position into many a summer's session. This comes highly recommended, with the







suggestion that you start scrambling 'cause it appears only a little over 330 copies exist.—Jimmy Alvarado (Chaos Rurale, chaosrurale.com)

DELAY: Circle Change: LP

I nearly dismissed this record. Delay's 2009 LP, Plain Language, features a slew of plucky pop punk gems that are all personal favorites alongside The Max Levine Ensemble's OK Smartypants. But I was taken aback by Circle Change's gut-wrenching, mid-tempo tonal shift. The opener, "Explanation," contemplates personal insecurities ("I need to trust my own guts again instead of getting fucking high") with some of the heaviest guitar tones the band has ever committed to vinyl. Each subsequent song is methodical, plodding, and painfully honest ("I want to fuck without feeling gutted") with '90s indie and emo influences intermingled. (I'm hearing some definite Superchunk and Silkworm vibes.) Although I initially felt disconnected, I listened again-and again. I decided to re-listen to an early LP, Don't Laugh, which is scrappy, chorus-driven punk, then Rushing Ceremony for the very first time: That's when it finally clicked. Like an estranged friend, I foolishly assumed that Delay would be identical to how I remembered them back in 2009. After some catching up, they are both the band I missed as well as a moodier, more introspective group that is equally as memorable, if not superior to their previous sound. They have peeled

back the pop punk artifices, leaving something raw and vulnerable. Delay is a friend who has grown up with or without you. Highly recommended.

—Sean Arenas (Salinas)

DIE KREUZEN: Cows and Beer: 7" EP

I can't understand why this has to be reissued, seeing as it should be mandatory that every household on the planet have a copy readily available, right next to those Eydie Gormé albums and Saturday Night Fever soundtracks your grandparents keep around. Nonetheless, the Nobel Prize folks or someone of similar stature should be showering Beer City with all kinds of awards for being merciful enough to make this once again available. This, my fine furry heathens, is one of the greatest EPs, punk or otherwise, ever unleashed on an unsuspecting publicbrief, zippy thrash that not only rages with the best of 'em, but is rife with unique musical angles that are delivered with a precision that still boggles the mind and sets them apart from the pack three decades later. Seriously, all you'd need are copies of their first two albums (and their contributions to the first Master Tape comp) to go with this and your punk collection is pretty much complete no matter what else you have in your racks. Don't believe me? Buy a copy. You'll be thanking me later. -Jimmy Alvarado (Beer City)

DISARRAY: 1982-1986: LP

Complete discography from this obscure Japanese hardcore band who

were around from '82 to '86. Two cassettes, single, and a flexi, all of which are here. For me, the flexi is the most crucial with its Discharge stylings and d-beat attack. The single slows things down and has some phaser guitar and shit and almost Burning Spirits-type yelped vocals. The cassettes are a little rough, as expected, but see the band head into faster, noisier territory—less Discharge and more Gauze. I love the A Side of this record but the B Side is for hardcore fans only. —Tim Brooks (Black Water)

DISGUSTI: Demo: 7" EP

Blown-out, noisy hardcore punk that is all the rage this minute. Disgusti bring nothing new to the table, but I know more than a few people who will suck this stuff right up without question. Just because. But the truth is, you, dear reader, deserve better than this. Punk, overall, deserves better than this. Vocals recorded in an echo chamber, saying nothing much about nothing at all, the guitar sounds flat, the bass limp, and drums are like paper. They slaughter their cover of Void's "Who Are You." At least they make that their own as a result. Some bands can pull this style off with ease and add a little extra something. Disgusti is not one of them. -M.Avrg (High Fashion Industries, highfashionindustries.com)

DRIPS, THE: Destroy the Chemistry: 7"
Two heretofore unreleased tracks from the recording session that resulted in their contribution to the legendary

Tower 13 comp finally see the light of day, and man, it's a crime it took this long. Both are primo thud-punk ragers that bore a hole into your noggin, pour the pop hooks directly into your brain, then grab your ears and shake vigorously. A couple more hits to add to this summer's soundtrack. —Jimmy Alvarado (Hostage)

DUTCH MASTERS: All of the Wires: LP You might remember the Dutch Masters from their 2004 Goner Records-released "Radio Active" single, and if you don't, then you're doing it wrong because that record was fucking killer. Comprised of four dudes who have been in some of the best garage punk rock'n'roll bands around in the last twenty years (Oblivians, The New Memphis Legs, Bad Times, The Royal Pendletons, The Cool Jerks), this record takes the three songs from that single, nine additional songs recorded at the same session, and two live tracks to comprise a full album's worth of skuzzy yet really fucking catchy garage rock'n'roll. The songs are remarkably hooky while retaining a raw and sloppy quality—the perfect combination in my book. This is totally right up my alley and absolutely recommended for fans of sloppy, unpretentious garage rock. -Mark Twistworthy (Spacecase)

DWARVES: Trailer Trash:7"

I really don't need to say much when it comes to the Dwarves. You either love them or hate them. I am definitely in the former camp. This single's title track



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comes from the upcoming new full-length *The Dwarves Invented Rock'n'Roll* and it is classic Dwarves. I will drunkenly spout this off to anyone within earshot when the Dwarves are on the stereo. Blag Dahlia is a songwriting genius. There are very few vocalists out there who can turn a phrase quite like Blag and make it look so effortless. Catchy, rocking, filthy... It's the goddamn Dwarves! Recognize!

—Ty Stranglehold (Recess)

ED SCHRADER'S MUSIC BEAT: Party Jail: LP

This duo go from sounding like a minimal version of slow, pretty, Gary Newman-type, early '80s-sounding stuff with a very distinct baritone vocal delivery one minute to the sound of a shrieking banshee with an unhealthy Lightning Bolt obsession the next. Sometimes it's quirky and dancey, other times it's harsh, but it's pretty consistently good throughout. While it doesn't necessarily sound like any of the bands on the roster, I could see this possibly appealing to fans of S.S. Records/A-Frames type postpunk jams as well. The record is most intriguing when the shrieking stops and the songs allow the sparseness to be part of the band: While this record is certainly not for everybody, I, on the other hand, just can't get enough of it. -Mark Twistworthy (Infinity Cat)

ELECTRIC FRANKENSTEIN / CHEATS, THE: Rockamania #1: Split: LP The Cheats are one of the best, most

after show, both locally and all over the place. They're a well-studied mix of '77 punk and garage, making them a perfect candidate to share a split record with New Jersey garage veterans Electric Frankenstein. No skimping on the packaging here, which is downright gorgeous. Both bands have wide appeal and play mainline styles of punk, without pandering or posing of any kind. This split is definitely not to be missed. —Art Ettinger (Screaming Crow)

EU'S ARSE, THE / IMPACT: Split: 7"

This is an official re-press of a split between two early '80s Italian hardcore punk bands. EU's Arse are arguably the godfathers of the raw punk genre, that is d-beat punk delivered with hardcore fervor and minimal attention to recording quality. Their side of this split is one Discharge-inspired distortattack after another with agonizingly deranged vocals. Of all the early '80s Italian punk/hardcore bands such as Indigesti, Wretched, and Peggio Punx, EU's Arse are by far the most underrated. Impact is a treat for me as I was not aware of their existence prior to picking this record up. Their brand of chaos is more traditionally balanced with classic hardcore styles but still as raw and frenzied as their split-mates. Now that this split has been re-pressed in grand fashion with two separate covers and inserts printed for each band, it is imperative that you hunt down a copy of hardcore punk history. -Juan Espinosa (Black Water)

EX-CULT: Midnight Passenger: LP

Ex-Cult (formerly Sex Cult) has fulfilled all of their prerequisites and is prepared to graduate from Post-Punk 1A and move on to higher learning. Everything is here: overt Wire worship, staccato monotone vocals, droning beats, and reverb-sodden guitar licks. Neither tight enough to be totally throwback or original enough to be completely captivating, Ex-Cult, at this stage, is unable to get past the formulas and find a distinct sound. Each song bleeds into the next as the guitars reveal all of their tricks right out of the gate. By the time the B-side spins to a close, the anger is extinguished, giving way to tedium. It's as if they're constantly looking over their shoulders at their vinyl collection. The LP's greatest impact is the surreal collage cover. -Sean Arenas (Goner)

FINAL CONFLICT: Ashes to Ashes: LP

Hot on the heels of the release of the 1985 Demo album comes this reissue of the band's debut full length. Originally released by Pushead's Pusmort label in 1987, this bad boy was/is a top-shelf example of a transitional period in L.A. hardcore where metal-suffused hardcore was rapidly becoming the order of the day. Though the metal is in full evidence, they nonetheless kept their output firmly in the hardcore camp, mixing wiggly guitar slinging with Dehumanization-era Crucifixinspired anarcho punk sensibilities and lyrical content, delivered at breakneck velocities. Included is a

booklet coupling a reproduction of the original booklet with additional photos, testimonials, and remembrances. Nice look back at what is now, and rightly so, considered a classic of the genre.

—Jimmy Alvarado (Tankcrimes)

FIRE RETARDED: Scroggz Manor: CD

Scuffed-up garage rock fronted by a vocalist who switches easily between cocky crooning and blown-out shricking (with a noted preference for the latter). "Garage" is about as wornout and oversaturated as a genre prefix can get these days, but Fire Retarded do spice things up with some unorthodox deviations into weirdo psych rock riffage. Comparisons to The Reatards are inevitable—do you think the name's a coincidence? This stuff is fast, frenzied, and dirty. –Indiana Laub (Big Neck)

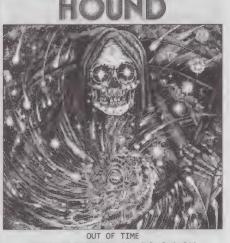
FLESH PANTHERS: Self-titled: 7"EP

On Smurf blue vinyl, this four piece out of Chicago flows in the vein of sticky summer night garage rock. Like FIDLAR without the pubescent boy band vocals, these cats scratch out four new songs. (A mislabeled track listing dictates I identify songs by number). First up, Ty Segall hooks and intestine-quivering yowls oughta loosen up your joints while the second cut leans into a Rolling Stones twang mocked up with Mick Jagger's exaggerated Texas British accent. On the flip side, the third track coasts along on a simple verse, chorus, verse singalong and clean guitar solo.



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"Gimme a Night" takes up a Ramones gang harmonization and an easy, breezy surf structure. Promising Chi-Town garage. Here's to hoping they prowl into town. Let the good times roll. Recommended. -Kristen K. (Tall Pat, tallpatrecords.bigcartel.com)

FLINGUE, LA: Discografia/3Maxis: CD

As the title suggests, this is a discography featuring tunes from a Marseilles band that were previously on three other releases. The sound is essentially primal punk, somewhere in the netherworld between Regulations and the Briefs, meaning it's catchy without getting too philosophical about it. The disc's epic clocks in at a whopping two-and-a-half minutes, so yeah, they're not gonna tax your ADD-addled attention spans. -Jimmy Alvarado (Sad Punk Discos, info@ sadpunk.com)

FRIENDS OF CESAR ROMERO: "The Hold" b/w "Teisco Telstar Stomp":7"

7" from Arizona power-poppers. Side A is a sweet little new wave number with high pitch male vocals, jangly guitars, and... is that an organ?! Side AA is more of a garage stomp and contains the questionable lyric, "If you want it nightly / I could times it by two." Does that mean this guy is going to have sex with me twice in one night or that he has some sort of double dick? I'm confused, but I don't care. -Alanna Why (Snappy Little Numbers, snappylittlenumbers@gmail.com, snappylittlenumbers.blogspot.ca)

FUR COATS, THE: The League of **Extraordinary Octopuses: LP**

If anyone is in need of a musical tonic to add some pep to their step then look no further than Chicago's The Fur Coats. I woke up on June 12th 2014 in a mysterious funk. Whilst watching my daughter at her swimming lesson that morning I put this album on my mp3 player and within ten minutes I became aware that my arms and legs were moving involuntarily—not exactly imperceptible to all, but there was some minor flailing going on. I suddenly realized that the music I was listening to was of the infectious power pop kind too impossible to ignore and that there was a clear sense of levity at its core. Immediately, the sun shone, birds sang, and I was smiling as I fully embraced the cheerful quality of The Fur Coats, all of which was topped off with lyrics that were humorous rather than outright funny—always a longer lasting trait in my book. I thank The Fur Coats for giving me back June 12th 2014. -Rich Cocksedge (Dirt Cult, dirtcultrecords@ gmail, dirtcultrecords.com / Artistic Integrity, artisticintegrityrecords.com)

GATEWAY DISTRICT: Partial Traces: 12" EP

Gateway District features ex-/current members of The Soviettes, Dear Landlord, Banner Pilot and Rivethead (listening yet?), but this isn't blitzing punk or sugary power pop. Instead, their mid-tempo melodies rage with reserved exactitude and scratch at my mind's door like a hungry cat. I open the

whiskers and soft body rub against my legs. This is a pleasant, yet confident, guest. Gateway District is like that. The choruses are robust and reassuring as if each lyric is sung just for you, as if this cat never begs at any other door, while the music is succinct with palm-muted guitars and precise bass lines that are dense with harmonies. Every song is independent, wandering house to house for something to eat, never relying on tricks or flashy hooks to trick you into paying attention. Eventually, these strays come together and assemble into five tuneful gems that are good company. If you aren't a fan of Gateway District, this record just might lure you in with its fierce Maine Coon eyes. -Sean Arenas (Salinas, salinasrecords.com)

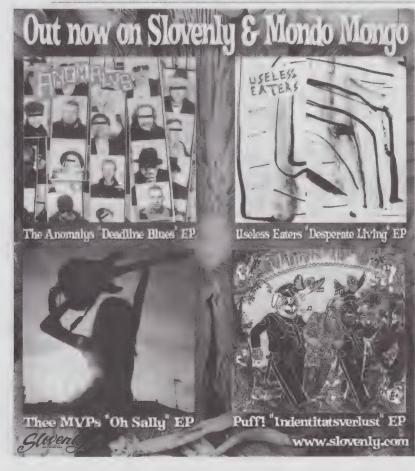
GEARS, THE: When Things Get Ugly: CD

No matter who you are, thirty-four years is a helluva long time to go between albums. Add the fact that your last album lo those many moons ago, in this case their debut, was a bona fide fuggin' punk classic and you're staring down the barrel at some Hindenburglevel disastrous shit. Luckily, we're talking about the Gears, a band that have stayed relatively active over the past few decades, their one-upping the Dickies' lag time between albums notwithstanding. Those looking for something as mind-shatteringly life changing as Rockin' at Ground Zero might be a wee bit disappointed, but the rest of us punters looking for a

screen and let the feline saunter in. Her really good (Northeast) Los Angeles punk album will be more than satisfied. Their core sound is still very much in evidence, as are their little toe-dips into rockabilly and other outside genres, but they've added a bit more country twang and other colors that occasionally recall the efforts of sister band the D.I.'s, which nonetheless fit right in with the Ramones-addled anthems they apparently can still toss out like hot chicks flinging Mardi Gras baubles. Disaster easily averted. This bad boy rocks. -Jimmy Alvarado (Wondercap, wondercaprecords.com)

GHOST KNIFE: Garrote Guarantee: 7"

It's a really cool feeling when you know a couple of dudes who do what they do and they do it well, then all of a sudden, they are doing something together and it's really cool and manages to not sound like a version of the things that they are each known for individually... It's its own awesome beast. That is Ghost Knife to me. The first time I heard them it was live and it was great (but let's be honest, I was most likely at a minimum 3/4 of the way to wasted), next came the amazing Kill Shelter, Yes CD and I realized just how great this band is. The disc got a lot of rotation around here. Now, here we are with a brand spanking new 7" and wouldn't you know it, they just keep getting better. I should have bought two, because I'm going to wear my copy out! Let's not wait so long between releases next time, guys! -Ty Stranglehold (Twistworthy)





GIORGIO MURDERER: Primitive World:7"

Now this is a goddamn record! Hilarious, heart-wrenching and way out West home-fi recordings. "Nobody Likes You" has such a powerful hook it almost brought tears to my eyes. Some square might listen to "Studio Time" and ask, "What's wrong with Giorgio Murderer?" Oh, my friend, there's nothing wrong with Giorgio. It's the world that's wrong. —Sal Lucci (Goner)

GIRLS!, THE: Let's Not Be Friends: LP

Not to be confused with the early 2000s Pacific Northwest band of similar but punctuation-free nomenclature, these Girls! are a Columbus sexy-tet-foursixths of which are guys with beards and one-third of which are actual girls ((bereft of beards to all appearances)). Their music can be lazily described as "power pop," but not of the strippeddown, kick-up-your-heels Nikki & The Corvettes meal plan-they've got a little bit more of a full-figured, breathy attack, with the usual guitar/bass/drum suspects awash in a swirl of Benmont Tench-like organ and such. Adding further evidence to the fleshed-outness of the band's sound, only one of the album's eleven songs clocks in at less than three-and-a-half minutes, whilst five eclipse the psychologically important four-minute mark ((important to whom, I am uncertain)). Song topics tend to hover around ex-boyfriends and drinking, as all the great ones do. Anyway, I put this album on at the tail end of a long night of getting wasted

and listening to records, and enjoyed the first ten songs to a reasonable extent. Then, just about the time when I was ready to brush my teeth and call it a night, "Sophomore" comes on. HOLY FUCK. Holy fucking fuck. Holy fucking fuckity fuck. Now THAT, my friends, is a SONG. If this song isn't in commercials and teen angst movies and on TV shows and at least as wellknown as "Johnny Are You Queer?" by Josie Cotton in a few years, then there is something horribly, terribly, insanely wrong with this world ((well, either that or the band fucked up and called a song that everyone is gonna think is called "Girl Parts" "Sophomore" instead)). I played it like twenty times in a row before I actually managed to get the needle off the record and pour myself into the sack. This song has reduced my critical faculties to the equivalent of a small plate of scrambled eggs! By necessity this concludes the review. BEST SONG: What the fuck do you think? "Sophomore!" BEST SONG TITLE: "Let's Get Weird." FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Exploding Hearts song title "Sleeping Aides and Razorblades" is etched into the run-off grooves on both sides of the record, leading me to wonder if it shouldn't have been "Aids" and not "Aides" in the first place. -Rev. Nørb (Self-released, thegirlsbang.com)

GLAMOUR GIRLS: Self-titled: Cassette

This five-song cassette from the new Buffalo-based tape label More Power is a bit mysterious, from the cryptic packaging on down. I believe the band is from somewhere in Pennsylvania near the Poconos. If The Briefs had more lo-fi recordings, they'd sound a lot like Glamour Girls. There's nothing to dislike about these tracks, and there's definitely something nifty about a secretive tape release. Tapes are coming back, but you'll know it's a real movement when cars start being manufactured with tape decks again. Now that would be fucking glamorous.—Art Ettinger (More Power Tapes, morepowertapes.bandcamp.com)

GO DIE: Nail House Rock: CD

My aversion to two-member bands has been well documented, and this doesn't change that root opinion, but while the finished product does lack fullness, they do serve up a mix of rock and punk that is nonetheless fresh and tasty enough that one forgets this is a two-member band. They keep things mid-tempo and straightforward delivery-wise throughout, recalling the better moments of early OC punk without relying too much on directly traceable influences. Good stuff. – Jimmy Alvarado (Go Die, godieband@gmail.com)

GODDAMN GALLOWS, THE: The Maker: CD

I can't tell if I am "supposed" to be familiar with this band, but I noticed online that they have a lot of releases and play as if they already belong, like they and the listener are old friends. I felt as if, by listening to this album, I

was peeking through the hole in an old barn door and watching the meeting of a secret society. There is an alreadypresent ear that The Goddamn Gallows are looking to connect. They are part psychobilly and part folk punk. They are part growling, bitter Hell-bound sinner and part set-free, dancing-inthe-aisles, crazy Pentecostal uncle. I could imagine these songs being influenced by David Eugene Edwards of 16 Horsepower and Woven Hand, or Daniel Higgs of Lungfish. Some of the imagery and lyrics sound as if they were written on an ascetic retreat into the desert. -John Mule (Farmageddon, farmageddonrecords.com)

GRAND COLLAPSE: Far from the Callous Crowd: LP/CD

Sometimes it doesn't take long for a record to make an impact. That was certainly the case for me here. "False Dawn" kick starts Far from the Callous Crowd into life with a thunderous rumble as Grand Collapse's debut album attempts to blow cobwebs away and clean out sinuses, relying heavily on a metallic six string thrust to back a weighty political punch. The galloping power of this band comes primarily through the guitar and drums, which work perfectly in tandem to keep the riveting pace up for almost the entirety of the record. Cal Sewell's hoarse vocals are spot on in terms of matching the intensity of the music and provide a gritty outlet for lyrics formed from rage and a need to not give in. The final plus point is that the eleven tracks flow

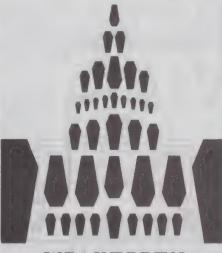
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well without blending into each other as some hardcore records do, thus helping make this one of my favorite records of the year.—Rich Cocksedge (1859, 1859records.storenvy.com / Pumpkin, bo@pumpkinrecords.co.uk, pumpkinrecords.co.uk / Static Shock, staticshockrecords@gmail.com, staticshockrecords.com)

GREASY WHISTLES /

LITTLE RICHARDS, THE: Split: Cassette All squares, make like a tree. This split shores up two psychedelic, garage outfits out of Massachusetts with five tracks a piece. First up, Greasy Whistles, comprised of past members of The Maine Coons and Closet Fairies, serve up lo-fi power punk. The recording quality could use an overhaul, leaving the vocals on the first three tracks sounding as if they were streaming through a soup can telephone. But don't let that break you. "Incandescent Lights," "Man Cave," and "Smudge Your Makeup" tool nasally choruses sang ad infinitum that ought to stoke the flames for a new generation of reefer madness. Once the recording gets upgraded, these cats should be sittin' pretty. On the B Side, The Little Richards goose step it wildeyed, taking the base elements of pop punk and running with it. Now I'm still mourning the loss of Tommy Ramone. I'm still getting used to the idea that the original Ramones lineup is dead and buried when all of The Rolling Stones (save for Brian Jones) are still shuffling their boney carcasses around the globe. Now I'm not going to say something as stupid or as trite as, "The Little Richards are the next Ramones" because there will never ever be another Ramones. But their energy is reminiscent of the moppy-haired boys who practically trademarked skinny jeans and leather jackets. Building on their demos of simple 1-2-3-4 power chords and rhyming lyrics fueled by LSD and girls, these new tracks experiment with different time signatures and rapid fire "m-m-my"s on "My Mouth," instead of the dreamy "oh, oh, ohho"s of songs past. "Caffeine Fiend" is a teeth-grinding love letter to the most loveable legal substance, while "420 Girl" and "Reefer Sadness' show off the boys' charming songwriting humor. Tight, fun, hilarious rock'n'roll. Recommended. -Kristen K. (Dead Broke)

GREEN DREAMS: Rich Man Poor Man: 7"

The '90s are back! Not the tight rolled-B.U.M. Equipment-Hypercolor biboverall-jean shorts '90s, we're talking some Docs-shorts over the thermals—fuck it, I might just wear two flannels at one time '90s. Grungy, distorted female vocals. Crunchy, chewy, stonerific guitars. This shit takes me back to a bygone era. Four tasty little nuggets from this Rochester, NY three-piece. A real substantial snack.—Jackie Rusted (Cherish, cherishrecords. bigcartel.com)

HARD LEFT: What's That Sound: 7"

The term Hard Left described a radical branch of the British Labor

Party in the '80s, which was strongly influenced by Marxism that pushed towards complete revolt, as opposed to the Soft Left which had a less rigid socialist position and was prepared to compromise. Compromise is for the faint of heart, I suppose. So Hard Left, What's That Sound, you know, literally? They are self-described as "Hard Mod." Kind of love that term. Brit mix of Sex Pistols, Clash, and indie pop influence Boyracer. No coincidence, for sure. Members include Stewart Anderson of Boyracer himself, along with members of #1 Smash Hits and Manatee. And the clincher, it's a clear lathe cut! Hard Mod punk with a political message? No resisting here. Get it. - Camylle Reynolds (Emotional Response, jenandstew.com/ Slumberland/ Future Perfect)

HAWKS DO NOT SHARE: HDNS: CD

An interesting mix of the bleaker wing of '80s synth-pop, spacious AAD production, atmospheric guitars, an occasionally funky programmed drum machine, and a vocal delivery that makes the Chills' "Pink Frost" seem almost melodramatic. Nice chill out music for those into daiquiris and despair when Sigur Ros is just too damned manic. —Jimmy Alvarado (Predator Friendly)

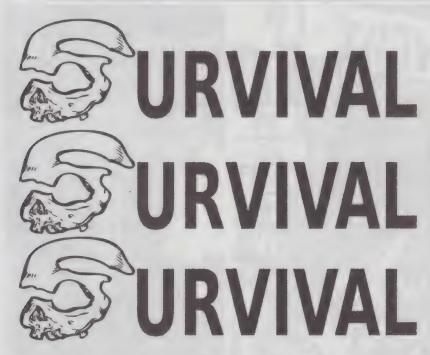
HCP: Pozytywny Stan Swiadomosci 1989: LP

Positive state of mentality. A system of total love. It's hard to imagine in 2014 that there are countries that were almost inaccessible at the beginning

of our lifetimes. When I was a kid, it wasn't Cuba and North Korea; it was Russia, Poland, and Yugoslavia. The fear of the red menace was rife across the west. The punks wrote songs about it, but mostly we knew fuck all. It was very difficult to find any music from there, as most had to be smuggled out. To get music into these countries, we would dub tapes and try and smuggle them in. I've never heard of HCP before, but these kids had definitely got their hands on some Heresy and Ripcord demos. While this LP is clearly influenced by the straight edge of the time ('89), the music has way more in common with either much earlier U.S. gear like Siege or the U.K. 'core scene of the late '80s. This LP compiles their only 7" (released in Switzerland) and three demos. All pretty killer stuff and the huge newsprint booklet in Polish and English is the icing on the cake. Great. -Tim Brooks (Refuse)

HECTOR'S PETS: Pet-O-Feelia: LP

Gorgeous, elaborate background vocals and vocal harmonies weave in and out of these songs. It's the sort of thing that you hear and you wish you could isolate it from the rest of the music so you could inspect it and figure out how it works. But it's better that you can't, because it's magically wed to these tunes to create a whole that's wholly unlike anything else at the record stores these days. To cheapen it with a comparison to other bands, Hector's Pets is kind of like the Beach Boys (Wild Honey-era, particularly)



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if the Wilson bros had taken faster drugs and listened to the MC5. Except with more sweet songs about station wagons. –MP Johnson (Oops Baby, oopsbabyrecords.com)

HELLSHOCK:

Low Men in Yellow Cloaks: 7"

Hellshock from Portland are most definitely punks, as evidenced by featuring members of From Ashes Rise and Atrocious Madness, but they're not fooling anyone: they love them some metal. Two songs of mid-paced fist-bangers which I can only describe as Randy Uchida (G.I.S.M.) fronting a Seasons in the Abyss era Slayer. Fierce, dark, and downright evil; it's good to see the pacific-northwest isn't all just postpunk and anti-depressants. Now kiss the goat! –Juan Espinosa (Black Water)

HERO DISHONEST: Kaikki Haioaa: 7"

Been at it since 1999, the latest from the Finnish hardcore outfit continues their offensive with five new tracks. Following up last year's full length, Alle Lujaa, the quartet goes at it entirely in Finnish. The first song brings up Die Kreuzen's heavy melodic shtick and explodes into demon-conjuring, mic-eating vitriol. "Nälkälakko"translated as "The Hunger Strike"-is a minute and some change of screamo, eye-bleeding, skull-bashing vocals over doom guitar. "Jumalan Selätys" is part '80s U.K. punk with stretchedout guitars and vocals shouted down an elevator shaft then pedaled up to a pitshoving froth. "Tammikuun Seitsemäs"

holds steady like a Black Flag track and hurtles headlong into a metal freak out. Bringing up the rear, the title track, which means "All the Breaks," brings in elements of The Exploited. Seasoned veterans, the boys showcase their range in five very different tracks. On sturdy, high grade vinyl, this could serve as a great intro to their catalog or simply a balls-to-the-wall addition to your stack. Hardcore doesn't get better than this. Recommended. –Kristen K. (Peterwalkee)

HIGH ANXIETY: Self-titled: LP

This record was recorded in 2012, and the cover was drawn in 2013. It reached me in the middle of 2014. This obviously wasn't a rush job, but it looks and sounds like one. Eight songs, seven of which are rather whiny country punk. The eighth song is distinct only for the wimpy mock epic metal part. This mess can easily be identified by the crappy comic drawing of dweebs on a roller coaster on the cover. Comes with a download code so you can wonder why you have this on the go. –Vincent (Bandwagon, bandwagonrecords.com)

INSTITUTE: Self-titled: 12" EP

Here are six songs of anarcho-tinged post-punk that would have felt right at home on the A Sides Crass Records compilation (think The Cravats or Omega Tribe) including everything that comes with that: unearthed production values, snare-driven beats, shrapnel guitars, and moody—nearly spoken—

vocals. It's all immediately familiar yet precisely executed. This is another Deranged release that rubs me the right way. –Sean Arenas (Deranged)

IRON CHIC: Split N' Shit: 7"

Iron Chic dole out four songs of that anthemic pop punk that the kids seem to love these days but appears to be lost on me. I don't want to sound like a complete shithead, but there are just too many bands doing it just like this without doing much else to distinguish themselves from the hordes. If you like the Dopamines, RVIVR, and singalongs, then I'm fairly certain you already love this band. Me, I'll gladly take my Tenement records and go fuck myself. –Juan Espinosa (Dead Broke)

IRON CHIC: The Constant One: LP

Mola Ram reaches into your chest Temple of Doom-style and pulls out your heart. But your heart has been replaced with a rusty can of Frostie brand Blue Cream Soda. Those rusty edges are painful coming out, but inside is pure syrupy goodness. Then the lyrics. Anthems of white hot light shoot from your mouth and eyes like Rene Belloq at the end of Raiders. The Chic has an ability to grab fans from all genres through emotional connection and their ability to write some of the catchiest songs around. There is a guitar pedal that adds a slightly different tone ("Spooky Action") from the previous full length, but if you've kept up with the 7" releases, the progression is natural. The horns, seagulls, and video game keyboard noises for intros and between song space actually add to the anticipation between tracks, as opposed to sounding like filler. Iron Chic encapsulates your worst day as you're swallowing the spoonful of sugar and asking for more. Every song pulls out your hurt and tosses it into the awaiting hands of friends to lift you back up. Not just recommended...essential. —Matt Seward (Bridge 9, bridge9.com)

KEITH CALMES: All We Know Is Now, New Music for Classical Guitar: CD

This is what happens when punkers grow up and learn how to play. Really learn how to play. Calmes was a scrappy teen in Fresno's Assertive Discipline in the 1980s. From there he went on to earn three degrees in classical guitar performance. So you will find a few more than three chords on this record. But like the best punk rock, there is nothing here that is unnecessary. The pieces take the listener to stark, spare melodic landscapes. It's great for Sunday mornings or when your parents come to visit-if you like your parents. -Lisa Weiss (Self-released, keithcalmes.com)

LABOR CAMP: Through the Fence, Over the Hill, Under the Radar: CD

Nip Drivers guitarist Kurt Shellenbach dusts off his axe, rounds up some cohorts with similar underground pedigrees (Rosemary's Billygoat, Jaded Apes), and they all delve into the world of bar rock. While there's nothing inherently awful about their debut, and





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RUBBER FACTORY





there are signs of real interesting ideas bubbling under the opening bluegrass instrumental "Diggin' a Hole" and the arty, dissonant "Romantic Interlude," the bulk of the songs here come off as unobtrusive blues-based rock at best, well played by a band that knows their way around their instruments but somehow not quite sparking here. Might do well for them to dig around a bit more in their collective punk pasts next go-'round. I'm not calling for a rehash of where they've been, but rather a suggestion to draw a little inspiration from that edge that made those earlier bands so interesting and use it to give some oomph to their present and propel their future, whether it be as a straight-ahead rock band, country, chamber orchestra, or whatever. -Jimmy Alvarado (Pitiful)

LATE BLOOMER: Things Change: LP

This Charlotte band emphasizes the "alt" in alt-punk to come away with a darker, more cohesive second LP. The record starts with "Use Your Words." a melancholy buzzbin hit born twenty years late. Then come a couple sixminute songs as the first side slows and slips into sad lethargy. Things pick up on the flip, as Late Bloomer shines mid-'80s Hüsker Dü, Replacements, and Sonic Youth through their own dark lens, winding up with an album that recalls Dinosaur Jr.'s Without a Sound in atmosphere, aesthetic, and the fact that the hits are front-loaded. Excellent cover illustrations by Michael Muller. -Chris Terry (Self Aware)

LOS CANADIANS / BLACK FORK: Split: 7"

Reissue of a split that came out on Starcrunch when I was a one year old. Without knowing this fact, I originally condemned this release as basic. However, due to its age, I am going to absolve it of its troll-like shouts about the system and shittily recorded drums. If you were into pop punk in the '90s you will probably go nuts for this, but little brats like me are best left listening to garage songs about pizza.—Alanna Why (Shut Up, shutuprecords. bandcamp.com)

LOVELY SORT OF DEATH, A: New Beginnings: LP

Very heavy, I'm not quite sure what to make of Lovely Sort Of Death. I do like the fact that the lyrics are printed on the back of the sleeve, but I'm not sure I understand the music. Influenced by Albini Chicago sounds of the 1990s, it's not especially contemporary, which is admirable in and of itself. The music sort of meanders, though, seeming to intentionally strive for a lack of accessibility. To some, this is probably a wildly creative, serious endeavor. But it's pretty damn painful. —Art Ettinger (Water Under The Bridge)

MAN, THE: Carousel of Sound: 7" EP

If The Man formed in 1981, they'd have been in the *Blade Runner* soundtrack as something sad android blaster Rick Deckard could listen to in his hover car, or a song to hear buzzing out of the strip club speakers where

replicant Zhora works before she gets zapped. Such is the disenchanted sci-fi hi-fi sound of tracks like "TV On," where the chorus is a series of machine-precise down stroked rushes and halts that accent the rock holler of barely intelligible phrasings about amember of the band? a hypothetical office anybody?—who hates his cubicle job so much he must zoom home, but only to smolder in front of the TV and get more soul poison. On tracks like "I Don't Care" and "Pay," The Man's trio of office terror-guttural throat drags, merciless machine rhythms, trashy guitar solos-draw out the exhilarating and hilarious effect that has gotten The Man compared to a filthier version of Devo. Bring on the album! Until then, see the website for a vomit of misleading office buzz words and info graphs mish-mashed by the group. Fittingly, their contact address is a now closed coal factory on the city's southwest side. -Jim Joyce (HoZac)

MANATEEES: Seek Help: 7"

A big fat "Fuck you," in two short, punkas-fuck, misanthropic ditties. We can all appreciate those days when there seems to be an ass clown around every corner. Here's another couple for that playlist. –Jackie Rusted (Florida's Dying)

MANTS, THE: Self-titled: Cassette

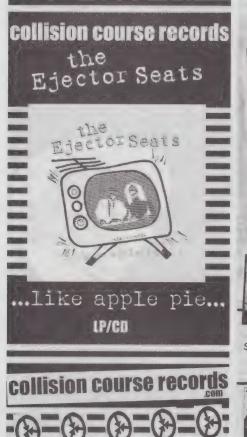
If the tape cover and portmanteau band name are to be believed, The Mants are humanoid bugs who have touched down on Earth to rock our unsuspecting citizens. The whole "new to the planet" thing would explain how they're able to play the same ol' rock'n'roll riffs with such fury and conviction. These eight songs are a blast. I'd be shocked if The Mants' home-planet shows aren't a wild mess of space beer and smiling ant faces. Mission accomplished, Mants! —Chris Terry (Shake!)

MARMARA STREISAND: The Purity of Arms/Lullabies of Destruction: LP

I now know a grand total of one militant anarcho crust punk band from Israel. Tense and nerve-wracking, violin-heavy stuff mildly similar to Submission Hold or Sake, save for the old yowlin'-growler dude-vocals running throughout most of the songs. Most of it is pretty standard crust stuff, though there are a few tracks in which the ever-present violin is used to good effect to bulk up their more "traditional" Middle Eastern songs-and then a few random ones where they just freak their shit out Combat Wounded Veteranstyle. A combination of their first two releases, the LP comes with a gigantic glossy poster and doublesided lyric sheet. Was a little too repetitive musically, but the band's sense of rage and discontent directed at their government and security forces was palpable and came across loud and clear. -Keith Rosson (Marmara Streisand)

MARTHA / SPOONBOY: Split: 7"

Martha: Both songs are feel-good poppy punk with a strong Plan-It-X vibe. Martha strum the type of riffs that make







you bob your head like a chicken. My only ding is that "1967, I Miss You, I'm Lonely" is featured on their latest LP, Courting Strong, so "Clatty Harriet" is the only exclusive. Regardless, good stuff and a great introduction to a charming band. Spoonboy: David Combs is a songwriter I've grown up following. I started playing acoustic guitar in high school partially because of I Love You, This Is a Robbery, so I can never say no to two new Spoonboy tunes. "Free Your Mind, Square" is traditional Spoonboy: stripped-down, twee pop punk rich with melodies, bursting with personality, and defiantly liberated. His second contribution, "Bloom Late or GTFO," is a sloweddown ballad pledging "to appreciate the warmth of the blood that courses surely through my veins." Listening to Spoonboy is like dusting the cobwebs in my heart. It's just good for you. -Sean Arenas (Nervous Nelly)

MARTHA: Courting Strong: LP

Martha is as drool-worthy as an ice cream cone. They follow a standard recipe of milk, cream, and sugar with songs that don't deviate much from traditional pop structure. Upon first nibble, Courting Strong seems like a reliable vanilla, satisfying enough on a hot day, yet never your first choice flavor. But, once you get past the initial creamy layer, you realize there was a vein of delicious caramel filling hidden inside. Each delectably delivered pop song is its own tasty flavor with subject matter ranging from the occult

("Cosmic Misery" warrants a whiplashinducing double take) to high school infatuation (albeit a very British high school) to dealing with unfair gender roles ("Sleeping Beauty" would make any proud feminist yell out 'YES!"). Like any good ice cream base, Martha takes basic ingredients and turns them into something memorable. —Ashley Ravelo (Salinas)

MARY MONDAY AND THE BITCHES: "I Gave My Punk Jacket to Rickie" b/w "Popgun": 7"

How the fuck did this record go unreissued for so long? Apparently, 'Popgun" is on one of the zillion Killed By Death comps but it's slipped past my radar. The guitar has a searing, almost ear-bleeding tone, not unlike Crime or The Pagans. I can picture the guitarist shredding away, looking bored at having to actually play, cigarette dangling from his lips (and a quick search of the interwebs shows me a pic of said guitarist that almost fits the image in my head). Mary Monday has an almost bratty shout-sing that puts The Runaways to shame. The way the cover looks is exactly the way this record sounds. Apparently, the band came and went in a flash and Mary Monday died under mysterious circumstances. A shame, but listening to this record, there is a feel that life wasn't long for these miscreants. -Sal Lucci (Hozac)

MASKED INTRUDER: M.L: CD

Masked Intruder's execution is a nobrainer: super catchy pop punk with lyrically bittersweet subject matter and a colorful ski mask gimmick. The part I don't get is why the first half of this record is as formulaic as a Good Charlotte / Sum 41 split when there's some genuinely catchy shit on the latter tracks a la Television City Dream Screeching Weasel. It could also be that I've long since waved goodbye to my interest in this genre and am now left staring at it like a third cousin whose name I've only heard in passing and, in all honesty, have no interest in warming up to. In any case, Masked Intruder have already struck gold with Fat and no matter how I feel, their popularity will surely only increase, so more power to them. -Juan Espinosa (Fat)

ME FIRST AND THE GIMME GIMMES: Are We Not Men? We Are Diva!: CD

While the world breathlessly awaits the proposed Kathleen Hanna-Miley Cyrus collab, there is this. All the pop songs you love to hate (or secretly admit to liking) done in a polished, punk mood. If you dug the Fugazi-Destiny's Child mashup, this is your jam. I really thought that there was only room for one cover of Cher's "Believe" (Tiltwheel's) but on this disc the song gets a more campy, less earnest treatment. "My Heart Will Go On" takes on a Poguesish cast. A Christina Aguilera cover contains a T.S.O.L. Easter egg. Lady Gaga and The Dead Boys? It works. This is a wonderful bunch of tunes for turning your car/bike/skateboard into one of those private karaoke rooms. -Lisa Weiss (Fat)

MEMORY MAP: The Sky As Well As Space: LP

Memory Map is a band based out of Bloomington, Indiana. I used to live in Bloomington for a few years. Sometimes when I think back on those times, I'm either like, "Ugh" or "Fun!" I went to visit Bloomington last summer and after I left I was like, "Meh." But despite my mono-syllabic reactions to the city, this college town has something about it that allows for some great bands. This keeps me from souring on it entirely. The four men that make up Memory Map are another great reason to keep from feeling totally disaffected about the place. The band is comprised of three guitarists and a drummer, with various members singing. Some might recognize a few of the members: Matt Tobey used to play in Abe Froman and does a solo project called Matty Pop Chart; Mike Dixon has played in Prayer Breakfast, Rep Seki, and Rapider Than Horsepower; and Mike Bridavsky is the owner of the famous internet cat, Lil Bub. Besides Dixon's vocals sounding similar to what he did with Prayer Breakfast, Memory Map doesn't sound like any of those other acts. It's actually math rock indie pop. There are lots of twists and turns in the intricate guitar work and Dixon's vocals are smooth and go down easy. It reminds me of what The Rutabega would sound like if they played math rock and had another guitar player or two. The twelve songs on The Sky As Well As Space clock in at thirty-six minutes, which is a satisfying

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length for the sound. While the music could've just been a simple guitar and drums lineup, the band chose to add depth through the occasional use of piano, strings, bongos, and huge choirlike background vocals. While they probably can't reproduce this sound live, on the album it keeps things alive and interesting from track to track. The front half of the album is stronger and more intricate, with songs like "Dark Freshman" and "Words as Water" being standouts. The back half of the albums slows down and is more pop than math rock, but, on the whole, it's solid. It deserves many repeated listens to explore the full extent of the sound. Bloomington does it again. Fun! -Kurt Morris (Joyful Noise)

MIRIAM: Nobody's Baby: CD

Miriam Linna is an original member of the long-lasting garage rock band The A-Bones as well as co-founder of the very storied Norton Records. Her roots to the early U.S. punk rock scene and continued dedication to '60s garage rock can be seen through both her band and her label. With these things in mind, it makes sense that the sound of this record—her very first solo album-would fit right in place with any expectations one might have for it. Part '60s Phil Spector girl group sound and part '60s garage psychedelia, the record feels like it could have come out in the '60s in both sound and aesthetic. It has just enough swagger to keep things interesting. It ultimately delivers the goods with twelve great songs that are very much worth repeated listens. -Mark Twistworthy (Norton, nortonrecords.com)

MISERY INDEX:

The Killing Gods: CD/LP/Cassette

It's been four years since Misery Index's last album, Heirs to Thievery. It was a blistering album that seemed to be the equivalent of getting hit by a semi truck on every song. It never let up with the blast beats and aggressive guitars. That lack of any sort of diversity made it a let down. The Killing Gods is different. There are still blast beats and shredding guitars but there are also guitar solos and some anthemic lines ("Cut the cord and start the fire!" on "The Weakener" being a great one). Misery Index has always been a combination of death, grind, crust, and hardcore, and all those genres can be heard on these twelve songs. Whereas the last album was full-on, the forty-four minutes of The Killing Gods has occasional moments that let the listener breathe, or at least as much as that is possible on an album this heavy. The overtly political message of the band continues, though, but in an intelligent manner. The first five tracks are a meditation on Faust as a symbol of society's attempt at progress. It's a literary approach, which shows the band's intellect and creativity. One can only take so much of being beat over the head with blunt messages of "Government bad! Society sucks!" Then again, with two of the members working on graduate degrees, you're going to get some more

academic takes on the ills of the world. The rest of the album continues their exploration of such topics as apathy, the religious right, and drone warfare. The voice of Misery Index is important in the metal scene, as the music's intensity and imagination matches that of the lyrics, and both work well together. It's good to see the band back on track and progressing. Fans of death metal should definitely pick this one up. –Kurt Morris (Season Of Mist)

MISSING MONUMENTS: Self-titled: CD

Where to begin with King Louie and the Missing Monuments? Firstly, the CD version of their self-titled album is essentially a complete discography of sorts, minus the first 7" on Douchemaster and the single on Slovenly. You get the new record, along with their first LP Painted White, plus their EP on Hozac. And, I have to say, I thought that the Hozac record was one of the best short-players I heard last year. "Another Girl"—which is also on the new LP-and "Love You Back to Life" are pure hits. I think I added over a thousand views to that YouTube video for "Another Girl." (Go watch it. It rips.) To say King Louie's paid his dues is an understatement, to say the least. From Kajun SS to Exploding Hearts, he trail blazed through over ten years of American punk rock. With that in mind, you can't ignore the rock'n'roll swagger in his songwriting. While a lot of people don't know who the Devil Dogs are, the rest of us never forget. The new batch of songs is

exactly what you'd expect, and I mean that in the best possible way. Don't change. -Steve Adamyk (Dirtnap)

MISSIONARY: American Strike: EP

New band from NYC that sounds like an old band from Boston. Thuggy hardcore not unlike some of the stompier SSD or Negative FX. For newer bands, think maybe Rival Mob or U.K.'s Violent Reaction. It's mostly hardcore but these dudes have definitely checked some oi faves out before penning these tunes. Anyone who knows me knows that I eat this shit up. Also comes with a sick newspaper lyric sheet. Boss tunes. —Tim Brooks (Warthog Speak, warthogspeak.com)

MONOMYTH: Saturnalia Regalia!: LP

Start with Alex Chilton's lyrical sweetness, drop in the jangly innocence of Half Japanese, and throw in a dash of The Replacements' understated talent. Wrap it all up in the magic known as "Canadian music" and you have the debut LP from Halifax psychpop kings Monomyth. I have serious swoon-worthy feelings whenever I listen to this record, especially during "Candleholder": "You're the girl of my dreams / That's why I stay in bed." Gahh, that shy romantic shit just kills me! Lusty feelings aside, Monomyth is one of few bands that can write a song where the chorus is "Fuck this life" and yet everything still sounds like a little slice of posi dream pop pie. Highly recommended. -Alanna Why (Mint, info@mintrecs.com, mintrecs.com)





www.mountainmanrecords.com

MONS, THE: Self-titled: 7" EP

There's no amount of snotty attitude pumped into the six short, mid-tempo tunes that grace this punk platter, and the opener, "Asshole," was quite simple in its delivery, but the subsequent tunes seemed a bit more slyly erudite than would be obvious if one were not paying attention. Normally this stuff kinda goes in one ear and out the other, but I found myself going back to it, which I reckon means it weren't bad at all. –Jimmy Alvarado (Castaldi)

MRS MAGICIAN: "Friday Night" b/w "Crosses": 7"

The format and the psychedelic black and white fit the sound. No joke, this groovy daydream shrouded in reverb might a well have been recorded in the mid '60s. They were set to open for The Sonics and The Zombies this summer, if that tells you anything. —Jackie Rusted (Windian, windianrecords.com, mrsmagician@gmail.com)

MUFFS, THE: Whoop Dee Doo: LP/CD

The Muffs will always remind me of Flipside fanzine. Throughout the years I bought it, Flipside was like a window to another world—sometimes exotic, other times sleazy—and it was that publication which brought The Muffs to my attention. From the first time I heard them I was a fan, as I fell for the way the guitars drove the songs along with more hooks than your local DIY hardware store as well as Kim Shattuck's unique delivery of lyrics—both sweet and sour—frequently

accompanied by her unforgettable snarl/growl. Now ten years on since the last long player, Whoop Dee Doo marks a return that brings all of those memories rushing back and it's no surprise that the songs sound exactly like a fan would expect them to. It's poppy and melodic but it's not exactly pure pop punk, nor is it plain melodic punk-it's just The Muffs and that means there is also a love of 1960s rock'n'roll thrown in for good measure. Yes, Shattuck's voice is showing some slight wear and tear, but she still has the ability to send shivers up and down my spine with her vocal performance and I continue to love this band for all the enjoyment it gives me. -Rich Cocksedge (Burger, burgerrecords@ gmail.com. burgerrecords.org Cherry Red, infonet@cherryred.co.uk, cherryred.co.uk)

MULLTUTE: Dritte: 7" EP

Mülltüte, how I love thee... It's your filthy guitar that sounds like it's being played through a AM radio, and I mean that in the most complimentary way. It's the first thing that drew me to you. Then you have that punchy and crazy drumming that's fast and catchy. I like to think that the drummer is playing with such fury that the kit is coming apart and spreading out all over the floor. Oh, Mülltüte, let me tell you how much I love your vocals, too. They have that dry rasp, as though your vocal chords are blown out, and yet you have so much heart, you're still digging deep and spitting them out

with that little extra to give them more weight despite any probable health side effects. Not to mention the backing vocals on "Exzess," and how they give your music a youthful glow. Plus that whistling at the end! Yes, indeed! I love how you go from song to song without much pause, too. Makes me feel like it's live, and as close as we'll ever get to really meeting due to the geographical distance between us. There's the hectic energy of "1000 Sei Ten Hass" and then there's the rock'n'roll base of 'Reibung" that captures the spirit of classic punk. And I must mention the guitar tones that sound all strangled and crazy on "Keine Angst" really get to me. Absolutely love it. Not to mention the way everything comes together at the end of "Neue Kreise." Such a great record. Mülltüte, you really know how to make my heart go pitter pat. You, more than many others, really know how to play hardcore punk. Take care of yourself, and let's get together again soon. -M.Avrg (Heartfirst, stuckinthe80s@heartfirst. net, heartfirst.net)

MUSEUM MOUTH: Alex I Am Nothing: LP

Museum Mouth's music lies in that sweet spot between raw indie rock and melodic punk. The recording's nice and fuzzy, the bass accents wistful, the songs swelling and subsiding...but I can't get past the singer's Conor Oberst-y bleat of a voice, or the super self-absorbed, self-pitying lyrics that make up what is being sold as a "concept album about

becoming obsessed with someone you can not have."—Chris Terry (Self Aware, selfawarerecords.com)

MYSTERY DATE:

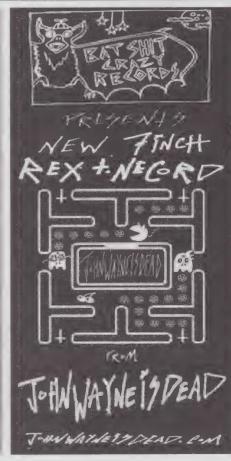
You and Your Sister: 7" EP

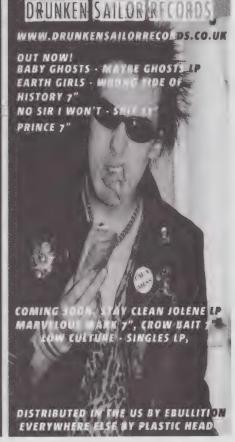
Another winning slab o' wax from these kids. The title track is a nice bit of punk power pop brilliance. "Lightspeed Romance" is a bit more Buzzcocks in tone and "The One You Really Want" succinctly channels the best bits the early incarnation of the Jam drudged up. The hooks fly fast 'n' hard throughout, and you'll find yourself humming some of 'em later on if you're not careful.—Jimmy Alvarado (Piñata, pinatarecords.blogspot.com)

NEEDLES//PINS: Shamebirds: LP

I want to get this one right because I really liked this record. But it's tough: I've listened to Shamebirds many times now and have struggled with that particular brain-tickle where something seems really familiar but you can't quite put your finger on it. Know what I mean? So what's the deal with this band? I mean, it's undoubtedly a great album, but what's the reference point I've been looking for? How to Make Enemies-era Screeching Weasel? Joey Vindictive fronting a garage band that loved treble and veered a bit away from distortion? Then, after about the bajillionth listen, it came to me. Hear me out. This is what Sloppy Seconds would sound like if they were a three-piece that hasn't based their entire identity around quasi-







offensive juvenilia. Sure, it's kind of a weird reference, but the melody's there, the dude's voice is practically a dead ringer, the songwriting chops are evident. Does that make sense? Sloppy Seconds if they sang about more interesting things? I hope so, because holy shit, you guys, Shamebirds works to great effect. Smart, catchy, buoyant, fun, and unceasingly snotty. Even if the reference doesn't work for you, how about this: Check it out. I bet you'll like it. –Keith Rosson (Dirt Cult)

NIGHT BIRDS: Monster Surf: 7" EP

Eschewing vocals altogether this time 'round, Night Birds drops four wall-scarring, wave-shredding surf punk tunes into your earhole with the same mix of tension and precision that's made all their previous releases stuff to marvel at. Given the righteous "California" punk feel to their output, it's still mind-boggling that they hail from New Jersey. East, west, plain fact is they're one of the best out there right about now, so if you haven't gotten acquainted with 'em yet, I seriously recommend you do so ASAP. —Jimmy Alvarado (Wallride)

NO BABIES: Yo No Soy Como Tú: 7" EP

I tend to like just about everything these guys have done. Jasmine from Neo-Cons is now on vocals, but that may be old news to some of you. Despite the change in lineup, there really are no traces of hardcore punk here. This is no wave-damaged stuff that is in a tug of war with free jazz and Teenage Jesus

And The Jerks (and I hear a little Noh Mercy in "In the Great West"). Erratic (or are they?) rhythms, guitars pulling and pushing, a sax that skronks and sometimes sounds mournful (like in the song "Your Lies"), and vocals that are hyper urgent as though the fate of the world lies in her hands. This record is a little restrained compared to the other outings, but they still are capable of pushing out into the further reaches and coming back with something interesting and attention grabbing. The previously mentioned "In the Great West" sounds a little like Noh Mercy crossed with Bow Wow Wow, run through the NYC 1980-something art scene blender, and spiced with the now. "One Size Fits All" recalls the manic energy of their previous outings and live show (which has to be seen!). -M.Avrg (Gilongo, jamesfella@ hotmail.com, gilongorecords.com)

NO BAILS: Epyx Shredder: LP

No bullshit punk rock from the Midwest. 'Nuff said, except for: this is a great goddamn record that should be spun daily by any self-respecting daily record spinner. I can really relate to a band that sings about problems with the original Nintendo system. To wit: I had a childhood friend who I would often play Nintendo with. It was giving us lots of grief one day, erasing saved games, not recognizing passwords, whatever. My friend threw it out the window. That's why that shit isn't around anymore! Also, I have a No Bails beer koozie that is seeing plenty

of use this summer. –Sal Lucci (Pelican Pow Wow, pelicanpowwow.com)

NO COAST: "Don't Be Gramps" b/w "Kick Out the Hamms": 7"

Pretty cool rock'n'roll. Reminds me of The Reigning Sound. Despite the goofy song titles, these aren't goofy songs. Good playing, good melodies, good songs. This is stickered as "Record Store Day - Limited Edition," with my copy being #4 out of 100, which is a shame. Though I like the concept of RSD in principle, it seems that most RSD releases are either overpriced reissues or under-pressed gems. This record falls into the latter category. We record store regulars don't need your colored vinyl, limited edition bullshit, but we do need your quality rock'n'roll records available to everyone. I got lucky with this 7". I concur, kick out the Hamm's, and gimme an Anchor! -Chad Williams (Glory Hole, gloryholerecords.com, jcsamz@wyoming.com)

NO PROBLEM: Already Dead: LP

Some people like to keep the food on their plate separate. God forbid that any corn touch the greens! The mashed potatoes must never coat the meat! No Problem might put-off these picky purists as they haphazardly blend together influences from the culinary spectrum that is hardcore punk. Each song utilizes distinct ingredients—equal parts reverential and forward-thinking—keeping the LP fresh and engaging. After the appropriately

gloomy intro, No Problem sprint into 80s style hardcore à la the Zero Boys. "Different Shades of Grey" slows down a bit for some surprisingly effective power pop, while "Help Wanted" screams circle pit street punk. It should come as no surprise that "We Got Secrets" sounds like The Germs. If the band wasn't already throwback enough, their logo is a moshy stick figure dude nearly identical to D.R.I.'s. Sure, there are some less savory moments. For example, "The Controller" bursts into a "woah oh" chorus that would make Pennywise blush, but there's a lot more right here than wrong. It's an aural buffet of hardcore delicacies for adventurous types who aren't afraid to mix up their meals. -Sean Arenas (Deranged, derangedrecords.com)

NONES:

Midwestern Family Values: LP

You had me at the saxophone. I love me some saxophone, especially when it's not over done, like on this record. Something about this, right off the bat, reminded me of when I first got into punk and would listen to all the eighties bands. A lot of those bands had a rawness to their vocals and overall recordings. Nones have that same authenticity. If Modern Lovers and Black Flag had sex with each other, it would sound like this. "Just when you think things couldn't get worse, you come home to a Dear John letter on the front door and a pile of dog shit on the floor," from the song "Browner Pastures." -Ryan Nichols (Hozac)





NUCLEAR CULT: Cruel Routine: 7" EP

Yes, indeed! Nuclear Cult dish out some heavy and noisy hardcore that wastes no time getting down to business. The songs are urgent, catchy, and near chaotic. The vocals are dredged from the bottom of the gut, the guitars are thick and chunky sounding, the percussion's like a wood chipper, though with enough weight to keep the songs from flying away. There's a metallic edge that gives the music a darker and doomier feel without slowing down too much. I will say these guys are wise enough to switch up tempos here and there in order to not turn into one big blur. The mid-tempo sections give these songs more teeth, allowing themselves to gnaw deeper into your memory as a result. Plus, there are parts that are sonically crushing where the drums come to the front. You're listening to these songs rage and then there's this rapid fire thud from the percussion department that does your head in, before they kick it back into hyper speed, or switch into the next song. Not to mention the sinister bass that holds everything together. Well worth your time, to say the very least. -M.Avrg (Heartfirst, stuckinthe80s@heartfirst. net, heartfirst.net)

NVs, THE: Trust Fun Suicide: 7"EP

Female fronted, this four piece outta DC slaps together members of Lady Cop, Electrocutions, and SWALTB. Three new garage punk songs which cast shadows of The Runaways tear off

into the title track, a jangly fuck you to all the trust fund babies and their inherited swag. Sal Go, the female vocalist, spits the title like a punch to their pretty, cocaine-eaten noses. "Ice Cream vs. Gasoline" is carried by a tight guitar hook like early Bass Drum Of Death. On the flip side, "Cut by a Hog" continues the catchy guitar leading into a clear, chirping solo and Sal's sloppy Courtney Love voice. While all of this is well and good, they sound like an opening act—there to warm up the crowd, as the material isn't especially engaging or memorable. But the fundamentals are there and with a little time and experimentation, they'll be headlining a dive near you. -Kristen K. (Big Neck)

OBN IIIS: Third Time to Harm: LP OBN IIIS: Live in San Francisco: LP

I loved the first two OBN IIIs LPs and think the band is a force to be reckoned with live. OBN IIIs have the fuck you swagger of The Humpers and the inyour-face crowd shenanigans of New Bomb Turks. There are touches of Iggy Pop and Sonic Rendezvous Band in Mr. OBNs vocal delivery. Straight out the gate, this album sounds more raw and in the red (without the instruments bleeding or drowning each other out) than any previous release. The songs are darker, heavier, and more varied than previous releases. But ending side one with a seven minute-ish song (half of which is an instrumental intro), then starting side two with a six minute-ish song? Not necessary. A live album on

Castle Face dropped shortly after this Third Time to Harm. Now, this is a great representation of the band. The cover looks more badass, despite having zero middle fingers on it. The sound is pretty good for a live recording (though vox are a little low in the mix), and there's the crowd baiting and shit talking that raises the ante of an OBN IIIs show. But, hey, get them both and judge for yourself. Just don't miss the live show next time it comes to your town.—Sal Lucci (Tic Tac Totally / Castle Face)

OBNOX: Louder Space: LP

Obnox launches right into it with some raw, muscly riffage, calling to mind both the Stooges and Hawkwind, but smoother and slicker, with purpose and no space warriors. The record makes a nice but brief experimental excursion before continuing extremely well along the path of the opener for much of the record. Obnox also takes fitting ventures into hip hop at various points, and laces wild guitars throughout the album. Far from as lo-fi as other output, but still raw and powerful. A damn fine record! –Vincent (12XU)

DNE THOUSAND DIRECTIONS: Miniscule Lives: LP

Mix of Clashy punk singalongs, modern punk sensibilities, and maybe a little rock. Can't say there was anything particularly bad about what they do, but nothing really stuck in the ol' noggin enough to register as memorable. Can background music be "punk," or viceversa? This begs the question. Then

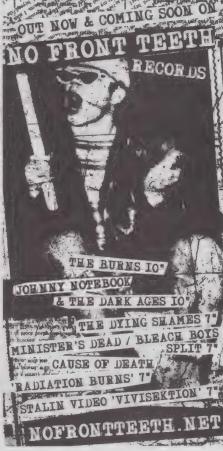
they started fucking around with punky reggae arrangements and my interest barreled out the back door. –Jimmy Alvarado (Can I Say?)

PALE ANGELS: Strange Powers (ARC Live Session): 7"

Pales Angels debut album Primal Play seemed to be influenced by two heavyweights of the early 1990s with a sound that regularly came across like Kurt Cobain's vocals and guitar being enveloped in a haze of Dinosaur Jr's all round fuzziness-and although it's a decent enough record, it now gives me the impression of just being a pleasant precursor for this single on which the band finds a more distinctive and enjoyable sound. These four tracks were recorded live, as part of the Amsterdam Recording Company Session series, and contain enough energy to power a small town for six months. The whole project also seems like an exercise in cramming as much ebullience onto vinyl as is humanly/ technically possible—notwithstanding the occasional moments of calm which have been snuck in for some respite. Pale Angels comes across with a livewire quality that makes me think of the brashness of Nü Sensae, the tunefulness of Shang-A-Lang, and M.O.T.O.'s lo-fi delivery. In addition I have to advise first time listeners that when "La Equinas" kicks in it, would be wise to strap themselves down to something secure as it's a sixty two second stampede-the song races around with the abandon of a small







child, with little or no regard for its own safety, such is the high-spirited exuberance that is set in motion.

-Rich Cocksedge (Specialist Subject, Andrew@specialistsubjectrecords.co.uk, specialistsubjectrecords.co.uk)

PIG//CONTROL: Trauma: 7" EP

I thought their self-titled EP from a while back was pretty crushing. This one is just as heavy, and maybe more devastating on a sonic level. Each song is a huge, rough, and raw chunk of sound that sounds like it's being torn apart and slammed down onto the pavement. The guitars are drenched in feedback and distortion. They push noisy leads that sound like they were pulled from the outer reaches of the cosmos. Percussion hits hard and fast with chaotic abandon while the bass gives everything a nasty grit and solidas-hell low end. Vocals are delivered in a rabid rapid-fire bursts, and yet every word comes across loud and clear. The first three songs come at you in quick and noisy bursts tied together with dread and distortion. I find I'm a fan of their songs on the second side (such as "Trauma" on their self-titled EP), which tend to be slightly longer workouts than the A side material. "Kein Frieden" is a heavy and noisy number that mainly stays on the mid-tempo side, with a brief foray into faster territory. It's catchy as hell, with head banging rhythms that eventually give way to whirlwind fury before collecting itself once again and washing out into a gurgling foam

of sick distortion as the drums punch holes into the wall. Fantastic! -M.Avrg (Heartfirst, stuckinthe80s@heartfirst. net, heartfirst.net)

PNEUMONIAS, THE: Still Lurkin': 10"

The Pneumonias-France's awesome response to The Spider Babiescelebrated their ten-year anniversary by recording ten songs for a 10". Obsessed with American culture, violence, and fun, this is the sort of record that's only polarizing in a room full of people who hate fun. There's a delightful viciousness to the vocals, as if you might get hurt if you turn the volume up, down, or go anywhere near your receiver. Recorded right at the beginning of the year to ensure proper 2014 anniversary delivery, this is as kick-ass as anything else I've heard from The Pneumonias. This record will be lurking near my turntable for a long, long time. -Art Ettinger (Frantic, franticcity.free.fr)

PORCUPINE: I See Sound: EP

Really enjoying this EP. Porcupine is a tight three-piece band from Wisconsin. Their sound reminds me of Queens Of The Stone Age if Queens recorded live as a three piece and didn't layer their songs. They also bring to mind a lot of the classic indie bands of the '90s, like Sebadoh, Fugazi, and Shellac. The songs have super catchy vocals and the music goes from a pop structure to these angular parts that jam for a bit. It keeps all types of attention spans interested. Well worth checking out. The LP is

limited to five hundred on white vinyl.

-Ryan Nichols (Riot House, info@riothouserecords.com)

PROTOMARTYR: Under Color of Official Right: LP

You like your music bleak? Look no further! Under Color of Official Right is the second full-length from Detroit four-piece Protomartyr. With fourteen tracks of sinister and angry post-punk, the music is unquestioningly tight, but Protomartyr's true power lies in their lyrics. Case in point: the chorus of the first song is "Don't feel no love for anyone / Don't feel no love for anything." "Tarpeian Rock" is another highlight, with singer Joe Casey simply yelling a list of things he thinks should be thrown off a cliff, a list that includes (but is certainly not limited to) internet personas, rich crusties, and most bands ever. I almost started crying when I saw them live because

I've never felt so sad while watching

a band before. Highly recommended.

-Alanna Why (Hardly Art)

PUFF: Identitatsverlust: 7"

One thing I love about punk is anytime I think I'm tired of something, a band comes along and does it well. This 7" contains three cuts of driving, poorly recorded synth-punk. The songs are in German, which adds mystique to the art-fascist, Screamers-like sound. I hate to bring an obvious reference point like The Screamers in, but Puff hit the era dead on. Lots of discordant hollering and eerie sound effects.

"Duss Ich-Routine" has an analogue hiss that sounds good with the car windows down. All three songs move. It's a real keeper for fans of The Screamers, Suicide, or The Spits. It's a real nice one. Sounds good loud. —Billups Allen (Slovenly)

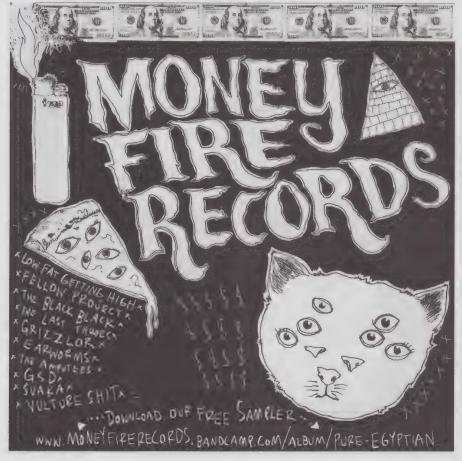
RAD PAYOFF:

The Good, The Rad, and The Ugly: LP

You can let the awesome "drunk voodoo luchadores on a couch" drawing on the record cover thrill you. Same with the song titles, thirty percent of which mention bongs. But don't lose sight of the fact that the music is no joke. Ten churning and choppy Am-Rep influenced punk anthems. From Chicago. Members of the Sass Dragons. -Chris Terry (Let's Pretend)

RADIOACTIVITY: Self-titled: LP

I plopped this puppy on, fully expecting it to be great-I've made it no secret that I've dug pretty much everything I've heard from the Denton-based collective of musicians with which this band is affiliated, starting with the Reds-and fully expecting to wax poetic about its inevitable awesomeness once it was done. Sure, the Marked Men would be a point referenced, along with Potential Johns and maybe Mind Spiders if they decided to get a bit "weird" in places. Lazy reviewin'? Yeah, maybe, but a musical thread one can easily defend referencing, 'cause truth be told, those aforementioned Denton punkers have eked a strain of punk/pop/garage/wave that, good or ill, is all theirs, and it can









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be heard/felt throughout their oeuvre. Anyway, the point is that I already had this badass muthafucka sussed out and I hadn't even put the needle to wax yet. Then I did. Hooooo-doggy. They've done what some would've considered impossible: thev've rendered my blustery, pontificating ass utterly speechless. Are all the above referenced pre-judgment points true? Absolutely, and then some. This, friends, is perfection embodied, a distillation of all that's come before it, honed into a juggernaut of punk precision and pop hooks and delivered with an anyone-can-do-this-but-notreally sort of unassuming brilliance. Those who whine about there not being any good punk bands anymore need to shut the fuck up and just listen. -Jimmy Alvarado (Dirtnap)

REIGNING SOUND: Live at Goner Records: LP

Greg Cartwright is a practitioner of a rare form of musical telepathy. He got into my head as early as the count off to "Time Bomb High School" and never left. From the beginning to the end of each song, I was able to foresee what was around each corner, not because Reigning Sound is predictable, rather they emit a distinct clarity of vision. They somehow strike every resounding chord, sing every soulful note, and charge through a catalog of memorable tunes without a misstep. As a live recording from nearly a decade ago, the production is crisp and Cartwright's journeyman croon is in full force. Most

importantly, all sixteen songs are remarkably prescient. The necessity for unfiltered, sweltering rock'n'roll ("Bad Man" is a prime example) is more dire than ever, given the latest trend of reverb-saturated punk that is afraid to be exposed. Instead of indulging in self-gratifying blues riffs, Reigning Sound exercises power in brevity, truncating songs into their purest, most refined elements. Now, I'm in the enviable position where I must dig through their entire discography. —Sean Arenas (Goner, goner-records.com, gonerrecords@gmail.com)

RIPCORD: The Complete Demos: CD

This venerated band's demos are herein collected on a single handy-dandy CD for your mind-melting thrash-o-rama pleasure. It's interesting to hear these cats again so many years down the line, because my memory is that Americaninfluenced thrash bands were a bit of a rare commodity in mid-'80s Britain. While they didn't receive the same immediate international attention as, say, the Stupids, they did dish out some viscous, vicious hardcore in their own right, and I think in the long run, they had more of a lasting impact. This collects six demos spanning a period of about a year and a half between 1985-86, all of it short, abrasive, and heavy. -Jimmy Alvarado (Boss Tuneage, bosstuneage.com)

ROWLAND S. HOWARD: Pop Crimes: CD This is a reissue of Rowland S. Howard's second solo album, which

was also his final release—it was originally released only months before his death in 2009. Howard's legendary stint in The Birthday Party will be most listeners' point of reference, and the reference is solid. Like much of his earlier work, Pop Crimes is a sparse, plodding offering that is both sultry and unsettling. Howard's resonant drawl seems to seep up from under the surface of every song, through the title track's primitive backbeat and "Wayward Man"'s squealing guitar effects. With songs creeping into six- and sevenminute territory, this album is probably best enjoyed as an atmospheric experience—as long as you like your atmosphere dismal and brooding. Thank god the sun is shining and I didn't have to play this on repeat in the middle of winter. -Indiana Laub (Fat Possum, bruce_w@fatpossum. com, fatpossumrecords.com)

ROY AND THE DEVILS MOTORCYCLE: Tino—Frozen Angel: CD

A soundtrack to an apparent film called *Tino—Frozen Angel*, Roy and his gang don't exactly sound like you'd think. Half expecting this to be a rockabilly album, it almost falls closer to a dirty, '60s-sounded Velvet Underground, or a raunchier 13th Floor Elevators. There are a few instrumentals cuts here as well that are a bit tamer. But don't let that sway you—plenty of cuts on this disc worth your time. —Steve Adamyk (Voodoo Rhythm, voodoorhythm.com)

S.S. WEB: North: CD

Country-twanged rock—or rock-twanged country, if you prefer. I prefer neither. –Jimmy Alvarado (S.S. Web, sswebmusic.com)

SAVE THE RADIO:

Calculating the Sum of Your Life: CD

Nope. Slick douche-rock runoff from some sleazy label that stops just short of sending glossy headshots. The artwork consists of context-free physics equations scattered all over the gatefold; the band is called Save The fucking Radio. The best it gets is this Tom-Petty-fronting-theoccasional Foo-Fighters vibe (not as good as it sounds). The worst it gets is Christianradio-calibre butt rock. This is clearly a band that took a severely wrong turn in the process of trying to make it. Good luck to you. Go forth. Go save the radio. Whatever. -Indiana Laub (Tazbull, tazbullrecords.com)

SHARKS FROM MARS: Self-titled: CD

Plodding garage fronted by a mush-mouthed Danzig. Filthy trash rock. Rock'n'roll in a garage filled with trash, basically, though the sound is more Demented Are Go than Hunx And His Punx. Sharks From Mars also seem to be going for a surfy stoner aesthetic—song titles like "Harsh My Buzz" and "Let Me Be Your Marijuana," let alone the band name itself, don't leave much up to the imagination, really. I know this is someone's thing. —Indiana Laub (Self-released)





SPIRIT OF DANGER: Malus Web: Cassette

Somewhere between chugging and blistering, sanity and satanism is where Spirit Of Danger contorts, playing Twister on the whole mess. Well done. It also comes with the tiniest most adorable booklet I've ever seen in album packaging.—Jackie Rusted (Self-released, spiritofdanger. bigcartel.com)

STALINS OF SOUND: Tank Tracks: CD

The best synth punk band in San Diego. These guys have been playing for a while now and it's about time they put out a full length. Stalins will get you hyped even before you put their music on. For one, you'll look cool with their record in your hand but also when you flip it over to look at song titles like, "El Cajon Beatdown" or "Rules for Your Mouth," you'll know it's good. Check these guys out. -Ryan Nichols (Slovenly, label@slovenly.com)

STAY HUNGRY: Ambitions: EP

Bless this lot from Sweden for keeping the straight edge flag flying. Typical graffiti style cover with bald and hooded dudes, songs about ambitions, judging, and being above the influence. The music is '88 youth crew with breakdowns, you know the drill. Fuck it, I love this shit. I get it, they aren't reinventing wheels, but who gives a fuck, if you dig current straight edge you will be all over this and the other discs these dudes have put out. —Tim Brooks (Refuse, refusemusic.net)

STRAND OF OAKS: HEAL: CD/LP

First things first: I have known Tim Showalter, who is Strand Of Oaks, for ages, and our parents are still neighbors. In fact, last year at Christmas, Tim's parents brought my parents cookies. They were delicious, but in no way influenced this review. The fact of the matter is that HEAL is an incredible album. Things start with "Goshen '97," a scorcher of a song that will be my summer jam, thanks primarily to guest guitarist J Mascis (Dinosaur Jr). From there, however, the sound tends to mellow and diversify. Throughout the album could hear Vangelis, Editors, Bruce Springsteen, M83, and Neil Young. While the opener is guitarfocused, the rest of the album tends to rely heavily (but not exclusively) on synths and keyboards, more reminiscent of Strand Of Oaks' last album, Dark Shores. There is a break from that sound at the start of the Bside on the LP with the slow-burning guitar rocker, "JM," a tribute to the late Jason Molina. The last four songs go back and forth between a reflective sound and a few more guitar-fronted tunes ("Mirage Year" has a primal scream and explosive guitar meltdown and "For Me" is a foot-stomping, fistraising jam). Lyrically, the songs can be intense. While "Goshen '97" is about Tim discovering music in his parents' basement in our hometown in 1997, other songs deal with the tension in his marriage and the attempt to restore it after his lack of attention to his wife and her infidelity. There's no blame or anger at her, there's no wallowing in the misery of his failures: everything is just what it is. Tim's opened up and is sharing. The subject matter can be forceful and emotionally moving, but, ultimately, reassuring as Tim proclaims in the closer, that he'll "wait for love." The album works because the emotional vulnerability is matched by the weight of the music. That being said, Tim seems musically conflicted; he's someone who loves both synths and guitars. There's a bit of both on here and it's all good, but given my tastes and interests, I'd love to see him write an entire album of songs that are just rockers; heavy guitars, and his black metal influences (yes, he's a fan of the genre) funneled through his singer/songwriter sensibilities. (Perhaps something like "Giant's Despair" off of Pope Killdragon, but more fleshed out.) As it stands, this is a great and highly recommended album-easily in my top five for the year-but I'm also interested in seeing Strand Of Oaks continue to push themselves, sonically. -Kurt Morris (Dead Oceans)

SUDDEN INFANT: Wölfli's Nightmare: CD

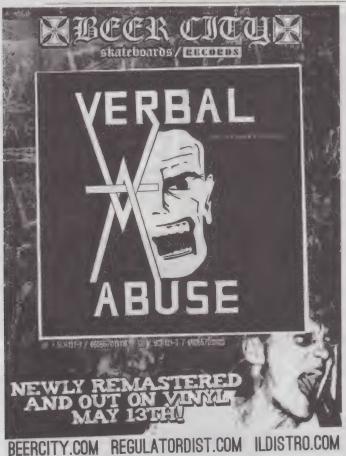
Tedious, deeply awkward political performance art noise from wherever it's from (doesn't matter). Avoid at all costs. Listen to Man Is The Bastard instead. —Matt Werts (Voodoo Rhythm, voodoorhythm.com)

SUNSHINE STATE / DEAD BARS:

Split: 7" Gainesville's Sunshine State serve up anything but warmth on their side with their two entries. "Lunchblood" echoes with the same passion and craftsmanship as that one really fucking good One Man Army record with the phone booth on the cover while "Long in the Tooth" slightly flexes a Jawbreaker muscle while driving the point home with relatable depressing lyrical subjects. Dead Bars from all the way across the country, namely Washington, plug in and bash out some anthemic "you don't need a lyric sheet" singalong punk with raspy vocals and a RVIVR-esque rhythm section. A formidable pairing of contrasting gruff punk styles worthy of your attention. -Juan Espinosa (No Idea)

SUPERCRUSH: "Lifted" b/w "Melt into You":7"

Unexpected release for what is mostly known as a hardcore label. Shimmering alt rock, sounding like Dinosaur Jr, Teenage Fanclub, or Swervedriver. Sounds of the '90s when everyone had long hair and dressed like lumberjacks. This type of sound has a place in my heart as it reminds me of a time and this trio has the sound nailed. Both songs have hooks and don't get into navel gazing like some of these bands can. I wonder if this is a start of a new trend? Hope so. This shit is great, if not particularly punk. -Tim Brooks (Grave Mistake, gravemistakerecords.com)





SWEARIN': What a Dump: 12" EP

I was partially disappointed by Swearin's latest LP, Surfing Strange, but this vinyl pressing of their original demo tape makes up for any soreness. Like P.S. Eliot's (Allison Crutchfield's previous band) The Bike Wreck Demo, Swearin' hits me at a subcutaneous level when they're uptempo and a smidge lo-fi, singing over swift chord changes and distorted leads. Crutchfield's tender, yet assured, vocals cut through the warm fuzz that blankets each song. It's impossible to get sick of these brief poppy punk gems. —Sean Arenas (Salinas, salinasrecords.com)

TALBOT ADAMS: On: LP

I always wonder at what point you start using your name instead of a band name. Do you recruit people based on the idea that you're gonna be the guy, or do you gather everyone together and slowly work on them? Either way, Talbot Adams seems to have done it tastefully. He writes excellent pop songs with a spacey consideration in the vein of early Robyn Hitchcock with a hint of big beat garage influence. The bass and drums are solid. It's simple trio rock with depth invested in variety. It sounds like an album rather than a bunch of songs. -Billups Allen (Spacecase, spacecaserecords.com)

TANK: Demos - 2006: Cassette

I don't know if it's the 1980's model cassette player I used to listen to this but for demos, the sound is surprisingly good. This is a collection of tunes that

were originally released on CD-R when the Buffalo band was active. It's everything you'd expect from a band that plays d-beat, but with a lot of vocal-less interludes and tighter than a Republican's fist. Definitely a good addition to your collection if you're into the likes of Skitsystem and 9 Shocks Terror. —Lisa Weiss (Black Dots, blackdotsbuffalo.com)

TERMINAL A / SASHCLOTH AND AXES: Split: 7"

"We don't have sex, we're from space," is what Terminal A singer Colin said to someone in the audience when I saw them a few years ago. Both these bands were on the bill and Colin crawled and lunged at people around the whole bar all the way to the door and made sure people were standing there like statues. SAA is a one-man band from Huntington Beach, but the music sounds more like something from the London Bat Cave scene. "Girls in Black" reminds me of a sped-up version of "Ahead" by Wire—but all the lyrics are about bondage and S/ M-so it's obviously a hot jam. The TA song, "Oedipus Kiss," is a danceable anthem. You'll want to dye your hair and hate your parents to this record. There are two covers, both with great artwork and it comes on red vinyl. -Ryan Nichols (Self-released)

THIRD WORLD: Under the Magic Sun: CD

Yeeouch. New album by one of the better known reggae groups comprised primarily of covers by REO Speedwagon, Marvin Gaye, Eagles, Paul McCartney, Credence Clearwater Jackie DeShannon, Blackbyrds, Paul Davis, and Benny Mardones, with reworkings of a few of the band's best known songs thrown in for good measure, all of which is "livicated" to recently deceased singer Bunny Rugs. Nothing is inherently terrible about their versions of all the above, and I know they're known for pulling tunes from pop and R&B, but the collected whole here feels a bit too much like it was culled from the set of a band playing a cruise ship's lido deck. Sorry but I much prefer my reggae steeped in revolution. -Jimmy Alvarado (Cleopatra)

THUGXLIFE: Jungle Life: 7"

Upon setting eyes on this EP, I thought it was a cool Jolly Rancher red, but after listening it's clear that it's more the color of fresh blood. Savage hardcore punk out of Poland with heavy-throbbing bass, d-beat madness—it's gonna build you up just so it can break you down. Short, brutal songs; just enough to sink its teeth into you. One thing is for certain, this mosh is gonna hurt. Tough. As. Nails. Fans of GAG, In School, and Condition won't be disappointed.—Camylle Reynolds (Refuse, refuseorder@gmail.com)

TODD CONGELLIERE: Wrong Side: LP

Like crowding into the den with your family to watch old home movies—the blurry, over-saturated type that are

developed on reels of film and fed through a beat up projector-Todd Congelliere epitomizes everything homemade. "I Like the Lights Off" was the tune you'd hum while riding bikes around the cul-de-sac with the neighbor kids until the streetlights came on and your mom would call you in for dinner. The honky tonk piano in "Some Are Fake" has the perfect beat to choreograph a routine with your cousin for the family talent show. Golden Age nostalgia, hearkening back to a makebelieve era of safe streets and block parties, an era long fictitious before I was even born, washes over you like the scent of freshly baked apple pie. Todd C infuses this ideal with contemporary punk sensibilities to create something equally anachronistic and timeless simple songs for simple folk. -Ashley Ravelo (Recess, recessrecords.com / Lauren, lauren-records.com)

TOTALLY SLOW: Self-titled: LP

Around age thirty, I decided that perfection is when nothing is wrong. I no longer needed to get that heart-in-avise feeling to recognize the greatness of a record, a book, a moment, a meal. It made the world far more satisfying. The guys in Totally Slow have been playing in North Carolina bands like Eagle Bravo and Rights Reserved for around twenty years, and I bet they feel the same way. There's a touch of angst to their melodies, like remembering being a teenager half your life ago. These ten songs are so well planned and masterful that you



might miss their genius. This debut goes off without a hitch. It's perfect.

-Chris Terry (Self Aware)

Reverbnation page, their guitarist came from Monkey And A Roast Beef Sandwich, "a local hippie hop jam

TWEAK BIRD: Any Ol' Way: LP

Lightweight stoner pop that feels more like a collection of psych signifiers than a record with any ideas. "Inspiration Point" is decent because they finally ditch some of the clichés. The rest of the LP is a beige hologram—average riffs, tepid out-there sounds, negligible lyrics. Probably chill dudez to hang with and maybe they melt your brain live and so on, but I'm not looking for either one of those things, honestly. I'd rather go to the desert by myself.—Matt Werts (Let's Pretend, letspretendrecords.com)

UNCOMMON EVOLUTION: Self-titled: CD

It's rare that I'll give a band a review without listening to their entire EP/ LP / demo, but this shit is truly awful. Uncommon Evolution is absolutely unlistenable, dear reader. I got to skipping a third of the way through the first song and skimmed till the fourth song before I realized there's only five tracks on the CD! I'm giving it the full college try now but-I promise—this is not for you. Unless, of course, you've developed an affinity for Creed, Disturbed, Nickleback, or Eddie Vedder-like yarling. They're typical hard rock with classic rock elements and a vocalist who sounds like he was recorded at half speed while underwater. According to their

Reverbnation page, their guitarist came from Monkey And A Roast Beef Sandwich, "a local hippie hop jam band." They proclaim to want nothing but to play BADASS music for you. I think the postman was drunk when he dropped this one off. Do yourselves a favor and stay away. Further away. –Kayla Greet (Self-released)

UNHOLY TWO: Talk about Hardcore: LP

Noise-damaged punk disregarding any and all conventionalism in music. Flipper's rhythmic trances chewed up and spit out all over a Drunkdriver record. The New York no-wave era could be an easy reference point but the recycled WWF themed artwork suggests that perhaps Unholy Two don't take themselves nearly as serious as Glen Branca and company did. Like Dario Argento films, there is something to enjoy here if only you can stomach it. –Juan Espinosa (12XU, 12XU.net)

USELESS EATERS: Self-titled: 7"EP

Really bummed I missed this band when they recently played a slew of shows here in the Bay. I outright fucked up because I really love this EP. A Side features "Desperate Living," which kicks off all super garagey, oozing '70s punk swagger with a weird Devo-ish edge—something about the keyboard and snappy, succinct vocals. B Side's "Dungeon" has a killer off-kilter guitar solo—industrialized and distorted—just fucking awesome. Influences? Buzzcocks, Jay Reatard,

and Ty Segall weigh heavy here. Ain't nothing useless about this EP.—Camylle Reynolds (Slovenly)

VACATION CLUB:

Heaven Is Too High: LP

Genre popularity ebbs and flows and I suppose you could even call those ebbs and flows fads. Folk punk. HWMinspired FL beard punk. Bands called Dis-something. It's not to say there aren't still really good bands, even new bands, in these genres, but it becomes hard to separate the wheat from the chaff with gluts of bands mining the same sounds. Vacation Club is good at what they do. Fuzzy, nasally, '60sinfluenced punk. New Swears minus the party. "În My Eyes" sounds great on a homemade comp or a podcast. However, I see Vacation Club getting lost in the Burger revolution wave. I'm gonna go listen to Audacity. -Matt Seward (Magnetic South, magneticsouthrecordings.org)

VACATION CLUB: Heaven Is Too High: LP

Vacation Club is my favorite Indiana band and is tied for the just made up title of "My Favorite Midwestern Band" with Wisconsin's The Hussy. I have nothing but praise for the Vacation Club kids. I've liked all their releases so far, but this record finally gets theoreeir sound down. Lots of between-song noise and background ambience, a hallmark of studio/show space Magnetic South. Reverb-y, psyche basement rock stew (here in

the Midwest, we do garage in the basement). Kids on the coasts should search this out. -Sal Lucci (Magnetic South, magnetic southrecordings.org)

VALENTEENS, THE: Fun in the Sun: 7" EP

The Valenteens' Fun in the Sun is their third and newest EP. Before I could get to the vinyl I had to pass through many, many pictures of band at the beach, but I can deal with that because I just saw The Valenteens play a great set at Dimo's pizza for Fed Up Fest, with Boots and Arugula opening. For a thin three piece, The Valenteens cooked a thick deep-dish sound. Toppings like Kyle's crunching bass and waves of Kris' crushing drums are rounded out by guitarist/vocalist Vince's melodic nasal delivery. Like hot peppers slithering through a mozza cheese swamp, The Valenteens' pop hooks slice right through the slurry drum blasts best on tracks like "Mile Marker" and "Long Way to Go." I only stopped listening to gobble my crusts. Midwesterners, this is a band to hear in a basement near you. See also 2013's fine 7" release, "Emma Lee" b/w "Later." which, if not Fun in the Sun, is what I'd eat on my Tombstone. -Jim Joyce (High Fashion Industries)

VANILLA BEANS: FFFF: CD

This little four-song EP took all the piss and vinegar out of me. Take synth- and guitar-based rock'n'roll (I'm looking at you, Epoxies!) and mix it with nouveau hippy-dippy mother earth sensibilities (now I'm looking at



you, Edie Brickell and those on your coattails!) and this record is what will pop out of the toaster. The male/female vocal harmonies are what really makes this record stick like spaghetti flung against the wall: even though a couple of these songs sound remarkably similar and the rhythm is fairly onedimensional through all four tunes, the sincerity behind those harmonies makes the record memorable. This had my toes tapping start to finish. A record for when you want to like the world, or you hate it so much you need an attitude adjustment. -The Lord Kveldulfr (Pancake Productions)

VANISHINGKIDS: Spirit Visions: LP

This record was a nice surprise this month. There are a string of genres going on here, from goth to postpunk, psychedelic, minimal, synthwave, you name it. If you're a fan of Siouxsie, Eva O, Dresden Dolls, 4AD (Records) you would really love this. The production on this record is really sharp. Vanishing Kids do a great job of not settling on one style for too long. On songs like "Spirit Grow," they go from a mellow Cocteau Twins sound to tribal, psychedelic finish. Nice job on this record, Kids. —Ryan Nichols (Bright As Night)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: Berlin Tristesse: 7" EP

Sounds like Berlin has quite the punk scene happening these days. At least judging from the bands on here. One of these rare all-killer, no-filler collections. Starts off with Peacebastard, who do their hardcore somewhat crust style, then followed by the manic Pig//Control who destroy with "Die Invasion." This is my first time hearing Crack Under Pressure, who crank out some insane thrash bookended by a dirty guitar sound that buzzes and churns before coming to an abrupt halt. Bitter Crop has a slightly poppy sound to their punk, but not the wimpy or vapid kind. Tuneful, with tough vocals, and a tale of apathy. Mülltüte excite and delight with their short blast, "Nicht Fur." Then Nuclear Cult lay waste to everything with that hellish guitar distortion and blasts of speed and mid-tempo parts that churn and scrape. Followed by the blow-out sonic hell from Earth Crust Displacement that gives way to a hypnotic lock groove. This is held together with primo packaging: foldout two and a third panel with full color photo inside, then there's a poster, a few postcards, lyrics, and a dust sleeve with screen printed artwork. -M.Avrg (Heartfirst)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: FSDC 3: Cassette

At first I thought this comp might be utterly threadless, but after a few listens it feels as if these might all be bedroom creations rather than proper bands. There's a bunch of kinda college-y stuff on here, some twee pop, and some painfully produced over earnest sensitivity. In the midst of it all is the awesomely named Raw McCartney, whose cut "Problems" sounds like DJ Shadow trying to recreate a My Bloody

Valentine song (or maybe the other way around). Aside from that one, though, nothing really grabbed me.—Michael T. Fournier (Glory Hole)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: Hamburger Saignant: LP

The LP showcases fifteen current French and Belgium bands. These tracks range from blazing three-chord punk to ratchety Back From The Gravestyle stranglers. Chimiks "Action" is a stand out rocker with snotty vocals and lots of discussion about action. Skeptics' "I Want You" also moves with the wrench. Funny how none of these bands have the definite article "the" in front of them. There are lots of "the" bands on here. Some of the bands rely heavily on the vocal reverb, but that seems to be the fashion these days. The album slows considerably at the end of side two with a nice Spacemen Three style sludger by Mountain Bike followed by a psychedelic epic called "Sweet Analog" by Forever Pavot. Well worth checking out the lesser-known crowd of France and Belgium. I'm going to have to renew my subscription to Maximum Rock et Rouleau. -Billups Allen (Frantic City, franticcity.free.fr)

VARIOUS ARTISTS:

It Came from Alabama: LP

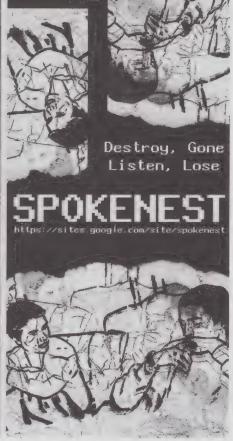
I consider it a high compliment when I say that this compilation made up of bands from, you got it, Alabama, could have come from any decade from the '60s to the present era. All the shades of fun, poppy, beach-blanket-bingo,

rock'n'roll punk are represented here. (It begs the question: do they go to the beach in Alabama?) I do not mean to give the impression that this is a kitschy throwback or retro surf-rock album. It still sounds fresh and new. It just has that vibe that connects Dick Dale to Television to the Go-Go's to Sonic Youth to Joyce Manor and back around again. I like almost everything I mentioned above and I like almost everything on this compilation. —John Mule (Eyesore, eyesore.storenvy.com)

VARIOUS ARTISTS:

Love Panic Compilation CD, Vol. 1: CD Oh, boy, there's nothing I love to review more than a label sampler. Especially nowadays, when labels don't so much have a unifying sound, but several sounds all competing for attention. Love Panic likes to sign a veritable mish-mash of punk, hardcore, and noise with a healthy dose of Japanese bands. Several bands repeat over the course of the disc, by the way, so if you were undecided by the first song, the second song will surely convince you. Really awesome at some points and garbage at others. If anything, this shows why label samplers aren't worth much at all at this point. I feel like none of the bands actually had enough space to show what they could do, and if they did, I don't think it makes for a particularly good mixtape. The flow is so janky and awkward. The tone and speeds of the songs just don't match back to back. So glad I got this for free, because





any money spent on this would have been wasted. Grade: C. –Bryan Static (Love Panic, lovepanicrecords.com)

VERA MALETA:

Beyond the Town: Cassette

Among the best archival 20th century witchcraft chant cassettes I got for review this month. –Michael T. Fournier (Let's Pretend)

WET, THE: Self-titled: 7"EP

If Kathleen Hanna came up in the '60s and limp wristed her feminist punch, she would be Mae Day, the vocalist of this four piece out of Chicago. In an octave that sidles up to bitchy, manic pixie vocals work with a garage pop Bo Diddley rhythm on "Bad Habit," sporting an earwormy chorus of "I'm so fucked up, I'm so fucked up" ad infinitum. "Let's Get Wet" saunters into a bluesy Sonics bass line, topped off with a mid scale Chuck Berry riff. The flip side drops "I Miss You," a dank basement bedroom rhythm like a disorienting 13th Floor Elevators track punched up with a Stooges reference-"I want you to wanna be my dog"sung in what I could only imagine to be a state of broken-hearted unwash. Hipster rock'n'roll on raspberry smoothie vinyl. Recommended. -Kristen K. (Tall Pat, tallpatrecords.bigcartel.com)

X-RAYS!: Jameson Shot: 7" EP

Jameson whiskey goes down fine, and finer still are the X-Rays! of Nottingham for supporting neighboring Ireland's economy. What isn't fine is the way waking up to the aftertaste of whiskey has cross-wired my brain to think that whiskey actually tastes like hangovers. But that's my problem. For the strong eared and stomached, every song on Jameson Shot will please, neat or with ice or water. G-Man's guitar roars with bottom dollar distortion and Gary X-Ray's weasely shouts are perfect on tracks like "Drinking for My Baby," crafting gleefully shitty rock of the street punk feel, minus the aggression and double the cheese. I can just get through these three tracks before the X-Rays! liquor slap overwhelms my system, which needs some watery lager (tempo changes) mixed in with the hard stuff so I can stand on solid legs and flip the record, which comes on marbled vomit grey vinyl. -Jim Joyce (Big Neck)

YOUNG CONSERVATIVES: Young Conservative: 12"

This band is neither young nor conservative. The one thing that is true of Young Conservatives is that it's very much trying to bring back the era of Revolution Summer from the mid-1980s given how its sound has been appropriated from a number of Dischord bands. There's a definite emotional bent to the songs, some of which is borne from anger whilst the rest seems to be from a sense of positivity, thus allowing an even handed approach and avoiding any overt negativity. I hear snippets of Dag Nasty, Ignition, and Soulside when listening to the six tracks here and it's done in a way that is drawing inspiration from that period thirty years ago rather

than copying it directly. As such, this is quite an exciting release and Young Conservatives certainly wears its heart on its sleeve and its influences in its music. –Rich Cocksedge (Obscene Baby Auction, obscenebabyauction@yahoo.com, obscenebabyauction.co.uk)

ZERO GAIN: Slow Thinking: LP

For fans of poppy, jangly, mod-punk like the Buzzcocks or, more recently, Low Culture and Radioactivity, here are seven fun, upbeat songs from French punks, Zero Gain. I've always wanted to visit France and I think this band would be fucking great to see live. There is a life and energy that makes me want to bop around a smoky bar with an Audrey Hepburn-looka-like, scooter-riding, Parisian punk waiting to break my heart so I can listen to these songs again. I love this sound! -John Mule (Gestalt, gestalt. pagesperso-orange.fr / Echo Canyon, echocanyonrecords.com)

ZIG-ZAGS: Self-titled: LP

Zig-Zags—a heavy metal/hard rock record on In The Red, America's premier garage rock label? At first thought, it doesn't make much sense. Like progressive rock, metal is a subgenre of rock best left alone. Nevertheless, there are exceptions to every rule: for every one hundred Gongs, there's bound to be a Soft Machine. Zigs-Zags are another case in point. Steeped in metal, the Zig-Zags are erudite enough to celebrate the stupid, namely Iggy Stooge and The

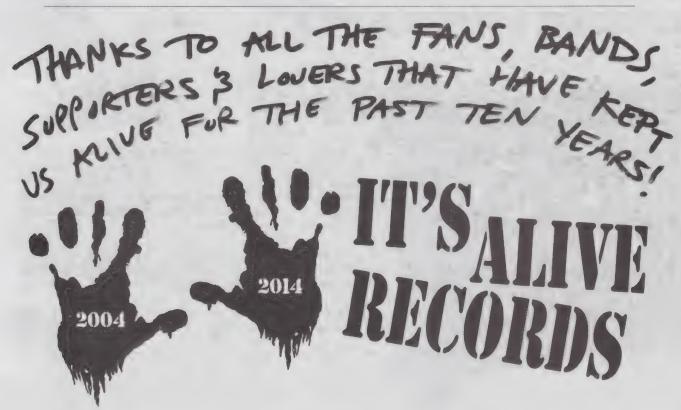
Ramones. The songs on this LP rock really fucking hard and are enjoyable as all hell to listen to. The Zig-Zags will definitely piss off your parents—yet their songs are melodic enough to keep on the turntable once that goal is accomplished. So get in your blown '68 Camaro and jam this full length on the cassette player. It won't be heard over the glass packs, but the desired effect should be achieved. Of course, your mom's four-cylinder Saturn will also work. —Ryan Leach (In The Red, intheredrecords.com)

ZOOPARTY: UpOn9: CD

It warms my heart when I see Scandinavians flinging quality rock at me that isn't black metal. From the opening notes, Zooparty suffuse the ears with up-tempo tunes that fall somewhere in the rock spectrum between garage and bar. Punk, with hints of '77, but not quite. Certainly not a foray into cock-rockery in any way. I've heard this record from a bunch of different bands before-from start to finish it's a solid punk'n'roll outing. When that's done right, as is the case here, I never get tired of it. All in all, this is quite a good record except for one clunky stab at a slow, crooning ballad that completely falls flat. I'm more than willing to overlook that, though. Good work, men! -The Lord Kveldulfr (Dead Lamb)

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KA/UK

THE CHANTEY HOOK

Underground 7"

What does it mean once you've "kicked the madness dead"? When sometimes it slips your mind to "drink to forget"? It probably means that you've grown as a person. Maturation is inevitable. But you didn't grow out of punk, you grew up with punk. And punk grew with you.

The Chantey Hook are a band of people who have grown with punk. And for those of us who went hoarse screaming along with Superchinchillarescuemission ten years ago, The Chantey Hook is punk growing up with us. It may not be as manic, but it's certainly not compliant.

The kids will always be the face of punk, but nothing is more temporary as youth. So dig your feet in, 'cause this is gonna be a long journey and you're gonna need some good music. Enter Chantey Hook. \$7. ppd.



NHITE MURDER Self-titled LP

Take the Los Angeles that Dangerhouse captured, double the Exene, strain it through John Reis's exotic take on the California sun, pour in a Brown Bronco's worth of Long Beach, and enjoy the shadowy, hostile, born-in-a-bar elegance of White Murder.

Impulsively orchestrated, the songs simultaneously latch on and push away. The vocals plunge to humanity's depths, only being brought back up by the balance of the bass and guitar. In the center, the drummer is too busy to sit down. Someone's gotta keep the pot from boiling over.

The waves break and vanish, but the cracks in the sidewalk just keep getting bigger. How can a city feel so dark when the sun is always shinning? It all comes back to the people. \$12 ppd.

http://www.razorcake.org/razorcake-records Distributed by No Idea!



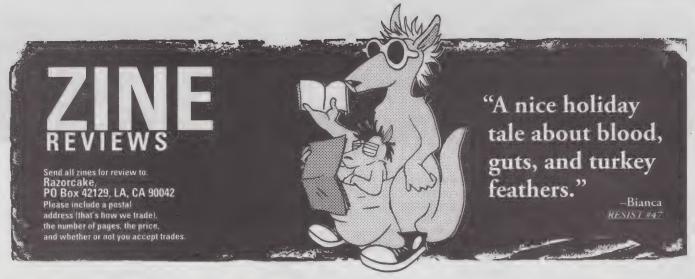
CONTACT ADDRESSES to bands and labels that were reviewed either in this issue or recently posted on razorcake.org.

- 12XU, 3005 S. Lamar, D109-403, Austin, TX 78704
- Ad Nauseam, 1443 N. Highland Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90028
- Alternative Tentacles, PO Box 419092,
- SF, CA 94141
- Artistic Integrity, PO Box 1126, Lake Zurich, IL 60047
- Beach Impediment, PO Box 8335, Virginia Beach, VA 23450
- Beer City, PO Box 1759, Milwaukee, WI 53201
- Big Neck, 39877 Thomas Mill Rd., Leesburg, VA 20175
- Black Blacks, The, 2961 N. Reed Station Rd., DeSoto, IL 62924
- Black Dots, 233 Lafayette Ave., basement,
- Buffalo, NY 14213
 Black Water, PO Box
 5223, Portland, OR 97208
- Bridge 9, 119 Foster St., Building 4, Floor 3,
- Peabody, MA 01960
 Burger,
- 645 S. State College Blvd. #A, Fullerton, CA 92831
- California Street Music, 13570 Tonikan Rd., Apple Valley, CA 92308
- Can I Say?, c/o Aymeric Gromand, 7 quai Des Comtes De Champagne, 10 000 Troyes, France
- Castaldi, PO Box 57158, Chicago, IL 60657
- Cherish, 2608 St. Paul Blvd., Rochester, NY 14610
- Cherry Red, Power Road Studios, 114 Power Rd., London, UK, W4 5PY
- Cleopatra, 11041 Santa Monica Blvd.,
- LA, CA 90025
 Collision Course,
- PO Box 865, Hermosa Beach, CA 90254
- Contra, Dresden Strasse 40, 04808 Wurzen, Germany
- Dead Broke, 139 Huber Ave., Holbrook, NY 11741

- Dead Oceans, 1499 W. Second St., Bloomington, IN 47403
- Deranged, c/o Gordon Dufresne, 2700 Lower Rd., Roberts Creek,
- BC V0N 2W4, Canada
 Dirt Cult,
 15141 E. Burnside St.,
 Portland, OR 97233
- Dirtnap, 3840 SE Gladstone St., Portland, OR 97202
- Dirty Rabbit, 1839 47th Ave., SF, CA 94122
- Drunken Sailor, 9 Lorien Close, Leek, Staffs, ST138NY U.K.
- Echo Canyon, 8 Rue Jaboulay, 69007 Lyon, France
- Fat Possum, PO Box 1923, Oxford, MS 38655
- Fat Wreck Chords, PO Box 193690, SF, CA 94119
- Gestalt, c/o Thierry
 Berthelot, 58 Ave. Berlioz,
- 93100 Montreuil, France • Gilongo, PO Box 7455, Tempe, AZ 85281
- Goner, 2152 Young Ave.,
- Memphis, TN 38104
 Grave Mistake,
- PO Box 12482, Richmond, VA 23241
- Heartfirst, Landsberger Str. 146A, D-80339 München, Germany
- High Fashion Industries, 2048 N. Albany,
- Hostage, PO Box 5401, Huntington Beach, CA 92615
- In The Red, PO Box 50777, LA, CA 90050
- Infinity Cat, PO Box 40992, Nashville, TN 37204
- Inimical, PO Box 2803 Seattle, WA 98111
- It's Alive, 11411 Hewes St., Orange, CA 92869
- Jelly Music, 107 Pinnacle Rd., Rochester, NY 14620
- Joyful Noise, 1043 Virginia Ave., Suite 207, Indianapolis, IN 46203

- Keith Calmes, 2 Garden Place #11, Spring Lake Heights, NJ 07762
- Lauren, 3961 Brockton Ave., Apt. 7, Riverside, CA 92501
- Let's Pretend, PO Box 1663, Bloomington, IN 47402
- Lost Cat, PO Box 2121, Saint Cloud, MN 56302
- Love Panic, PO Box 420222, Houston, TX 77242
- Manondor c/o Ben Schorr, 1017 S 6th St., Philadelphia, PA 19147
- Marmara Streisand c/o Yonatan Eldan, 3rd Friedland St., Tel-Aviv 69352, Israel
- Mint, PO Box 3613, M.P.O., Vancouver, BC, V6B 3Y6, Canada
- Negative Fun, PO Box 97212, Raleigh, NC 27624
- Nikt Nic Nie Wie, PO Box 53, 34-400 Nowy Targ, Poland
- No Anger Control c/o Tiffany Badger, 3038 Northampton Dr., Charlotte, NC 28210
- No Idea, PO Box 14636 Gainesville, FL 32604
- Norton, Box 646, Cooper Station, NY, NY 10276
- Pancake Productions, PO Box 16874, St. Louis, MO 63105-1474
- Pitiful, PO Box 3453, Gardena, CA 90247
- Pity, 1960 Bloor W., Toronto, ON M6P3K9,
- Canada
 Predator Friendly,
 PO Box 42638.
- Portland, OR 97214
 Recess. PO Box 166
- Recess, PO Box 1666, San Pedro, CA 90733
- Relapse, PO Box 2060, Upper Darby, PA 19082
- Riot House, 13758 Ruette Le Parc, Unit A, Del Mar, CA 92014
- Salinas, PO Box 32257 Detroit, MI 48232

- Screaming Crow, 4407 Bowes Ave., West Mifflin, PA 15122
- Season Of Mist, 3565 Sepviva St., Philadelphia, PA 19134
- Sex Tide/Bloody Show, 2474 N. 4th St.,
- Columbus, OH, 43202 Shake!,
- 4203 Rossiter Dr., Victoria, BC V8N 4S8, Canada
- Slovenly, PO Box 204, Reno, NV 89504
- Slow Death,
 72 Rue de Charonne,
 75011 Paris France
- 75011 Paris, France Slumberland, PO Box 19029,
- Oakland, CA 94619
- Smash!, 2314 18th St., Washington, DC 20009
- Snappy Little Numbers, PO Box 370602, Denver, CO 80237
- Taken By Surprise, c/o Michl Krenner, Landsberger Straße 3, 80339 München, Germany
- Tazbull, PO Box 141,
- Longview, TX 75606
 This Will Be Our Sumer,
- 196 Alps Rd., Suite 2-133,
- Athens, GA 30606
- Tic Tac Totally, PO Box 558383,
- Chicago, IL 60655
 Twistworthy,
 PO Box 4491,
- Austin, TX 78765-4491
 Vinyl Conflict,
- 324 S. Pine St.,
- Voodoo Rhythm, Wankdorffeldstrasse 92,
- 3014 Bern, Switzerland
 Warthog Speak, 2109
- Wartnog Speak, 2109 23rd St., SF, CA, 94107 • Water Under
- The Bridge, PO Box 1794, San Pedro, CA 90733



11 THINGS YOU NEVER KNEW ABOUT ALEISTER CROWLEY,

\$1, 2 1/8" x 2 3/4", copied, 16 pgs.

Though I find the 11 "things" listed somewhat interesting, the lack of background about these anecdotes causes the zine to fall flat. The one-line pages can most likely be attributed to the zine's small size, but, unfortunately, this only added to the sense of reading an online list someone linked to their Facebook status. —Ashley Ravelo (MC Sunflower Jones, 1514 Studebaker Rd., Long Beach, CA 90815)

1997: A TEEN QUEEN TIME CAPSULE, \$3, 5 ½" x 8 ½", copied, 16 pgs. In reading perzines, it's exciting to find parallels with the author. Yet, it's more intriguing when confronted with the stark differences of personal experience. The major flaw with this zine is its lack of a clear delineation between its two authors. Assuming each contributed every other page (which is all I could fathom after multiple reads), Deirdree Prudence's input was my favorite of the two. Her entries seem like intimate confessions, as if I'm reading the diary she left open on her bed. I can relate to this sixteen-year-old girl who liked crafting and watching "vintage game shows." In comparison, Jolie Nunez-Noggle's collage illustrations seem to serve only as a means of breaking up text and bring little to no substance to the table. Hopefully, there's a stronger, more focused zine around the corner that isn't satisfied by padding its length with poorly copied collages. It's 2014, not 1997; there are solutions to these light balance problems. —Ashley Ravelo (MC Sunflower Jones, 1514 Studebaker Rd., Long Beach, CA 90815)

AGGRO, \$3, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", copied w/ glossy cover, 30 pgs.

This is a one-off zine comprised of seven essays about some punks' experiences in the 1980s and early '90s. The impetus for this is that the editor of this collection found himself and other forty to fifty-something punks sitting around sharing stories of shows from back in the day and decided to get those punks to put their tales in writing. All of them take place in California/Tijuana or the New York/New Jersey area and none are run-ofthe-mill. There's the story of the time Jello Biafra's leg was broken at 924 Gilman, the one where the show in Tijuana got busted by the cops, and the time there was a riot (actually, that seemed to happen in more than one of these stories). Violence was a frequent theme in many of the tales, including my favorite, from Dale Johnson: "I seem to remember a bottle crashing incident...involving Rob Chaos (of the band Total Chaos) as some punk had either accused him of singing with a fake British accent or fucking his girlfriend." As someone who occasionally indulges in punk rock nostalgia, I appreciated the stories that were told. I didn't always recognize the bands that were mentioned, but I could understand the excitement, the feel of what it's like in the pit, and the satisfaction in finding a place where you belong. I found myself in the moment with the authors and by including old show flyers it provided that extra bit of history that tied me in to the time and place in each story. Some of the authors meandered —their writing could've been tightened up, and the action could've been heightened through better storytelling-but overall this was a fun read whose material was right up my alley. Aggro is easily one of the best zines I've read in a long while. -Kurt Morris (Cory Linstrum, 630 Taylor Ave., Alameda, CA 94501, savagedamagedigest@gmail.com)

CHEAPTOYS #15, €2, 4" x 6", copied, 40 pgs.

This zine is written in both French and English and while neither is dominant, I don't know French, so I can only review this in regards to the English portions. What I did read I really enjoyed, as the author wrote pieces about the effect of punk on his life and a road trip from Montreal to visit libraries in New York

City and New Haven, Connecticut. When I figured out that he was a library student, I identified with the zine even more since I am not only a library nerd, but also have a library science degree. The author seems like a laid back person, the type of individual I could get along with (similar interests always help). Like him, when I go on vacation I like to visit libraries (especially nontraditional ones) to see how they operate. I only wish I read French! Instead, I will take this to Montreal with me in a few weeks when I go to visit my Québécois friend and make her read this to me. Definitely recommended for any bilingual punks. –Kurt Morris (Cheaptoys, 19, montee du caroubier, 06240 Beausoleil, France, xtramedium@laposte.net)

DED WEIGHT, #1, \$?, 51/2" x 81/2", 28 pgs.

"Oh god, fucking why" one might think, casually sifting through the pages of *Ded Weight*. Truly, *Ded Weight* belongs in the heavy-weight class of vulgar and crude comic books. The art is unpolished, simplistic, and gross. Think explosive diarrhea, a talking penis, and a cover with a man cutting his own genitalia off. Now, I, being the charming and sophisticated individual that I am, have the refined palate to digest such a fine piece of art. Though I didn't think every one of its jokes landed, if you have a soft spot for toilet humor, *Ded Weight* is a decent option. I would not hesitate to read more, but I couldn't call it a good comic in the traditional sense. Grade: B+. —Bryan Static (1480 Pepperhill Dr., Florissant, MO 63033)

DO YOU REMEMBER ROCK'N'ROLL RADIO?, #1, \$5, 101/4" x 7", 28 pgs. The story, adapted from a column by a former record store and record label owner, is about the last time he ever met the Ramones. As a story, it's a great read. The prose touches on concepts of aging, increasing irrelevance, and the fading cultural ghost of rock'n'roll. To the kids who listen to the Ramones, the band exists in mythic-like tales, as ghosts of an age of rock that no longer exists. But to Bela Koe-Krompecher, the Ramones were flesh and blood entities. They were record collectors, stoners, and all around great guys who looked out for people they considered their friends. Bela contemplates all of this when he sees a Ramones T-shirt worn by a junkie, and reminisces about his experiences interacting with the band. Though the story was excellent, I can't in good consciousness say that as a comic book it worked insanely well. Some panels got too bogged down by text and a good chunk of text had to be kept as omniscient narration because it would have either taken too many pages to adapt it graphically or there is no real way to show it visually. This dwelling on abstract thought is antithetical to a comic book and only really works in the prose medium. But those are the dangers of adapting a prose story into such a format. Grade: B. -Bryan Static (Nix Rock'n'Roll Comics, nixcomics.com)

DORIS #31, \$3, 51/2" x 81/2", copied, 18pgs.

Doris #31 is another great addition to an already prolific series by Cindy Crabb. This issue is partly about the hardships that could happen when you value your ethics and not compromising them for anything or anyone, and if you're lucky you'll find close friends who share the same passion and beliefs as you. Even if it takes you to dark places, your dreams should never be compromised. I realize that it's a luxury to be able to hold on to your strongest dreams and deepest desires, which is what makes this zine so uplifting. —Simon Sotelo (Doris Press, PO Box 29, Athens, Ohio, 45701)

GAG ME WITH A...#10, \$3.33, 5½" x 8½", copied, 38pgs.

MC Sunflower Jones give us another delightful Gag Me with a... zine featuring twenty-two writers and visual artist, creating one of the most interesting

series I've read lately. From poems to fiction to anecdotal moments in time, these contributors together make something that is nostalgic, funny, sad, and occasionally really, really desperate. This issue contains reviews, chats with distro owners, and a breakdown of some of the bigger zine events that are happening around the country. My favorite part of the issue is an introspective look into our own DIY/zine community as a whole; we claim to be "all inclusive" but with the exception of closed-minded outsiders. I see that too often and I'm just as surprised as I am glad to have seen someone else mention it publicly. In short, "don't be an asshole," but do get this zine. —Simon Sotelo (MCSunflowerJones@ZinesAndShit.com)

HERE HAVE A TURD, \$?, 51/2" x 81/2", copied, 20pgs.

One man's short anecdotes—not reliving the glory days of an angsty-hardcore teenage to young adult life—but short excerpts reliving some seemingly small moments and relationships that, over time, turned one lonely old man into one lonely old anarchist. What follows are a series of hyper-condensed declarations painting modern society as a dangerous and self-destructive machine. Suffice it to say it is nothing we haven't heard, especially in the punk/DIY community, but I did enjoy the way they related to his life's narrative. The true stories of a teenage "sidekick" to a drugged-out degenerate in the 1960s might be something I never get to read about in a zine, and I'm hoping this is a pessimistic view. The photos inside are suggestive and disturbing and perfect, and not something I would ever want to take with me and read on the bus because I don't like to talk to strangers when I commute. The cover alone is a real conversation starter. I kinda love the cover. —Simon Sotelo (SidClark1953@gmail.com)

PORTABLE NOT MY SMALL DIARY, \$7.50, 81/2" x 5 1/2", 212 pgs.

So excellent I didn't even read the whole thing, as it seemed a disservice to it. While reviewing something, I sometimes find I have to rush to finish because of deadlines. I decided I don't want to do that to this book. I read the first fifty pages and I loved every moment. The contributors to this anthology are diverse, including names that we all know and love, like Ben Snakepit, John Porcellino and Liz Prince. Some of these comics are about a decade old at this point, but the sheer variety and quality in this book is something to be read slowly, deliberately. Soak in every word and enjoy all the different art styles that compose the medium of autobiographical comics. As a newcomer to *Not My Small Diary*, I had honestly never heard of it before. This book is an excellent introduction to its scene and purpose. Of the pages I read, stories focused on experiences with fetishes, first dates, engagements, and food. God, just buy a copy, okay? Buy several. You need to get Christmas shopping out of the way and everybody loves autobiographical comics. Grade: A. –Bryan Static (Delaine Derry Green, 459 Main St., Ste 101-263, Trussville, AL 35173, mysmallwebpage.com)

RAILROAD SEMANTICS #3, \$7.95, 5 1/2" x 7", paperback, 64 pgs.

For those of you, like myself, who have fantasized about train hopping but never done it, this is a wonderful travel guide of what it's like. Author Aaron Dactyl lets us voyeuristically tag along with him from Portland to Denver in the grips of winter, with many stop offs along the way. With a vague idea of his destination and being at the mercy of the rail schedules, he shows us a world many think they understand, though could never truly know with out firsthand experience. Sprinkled throughout the zine there are rail-centric newspaper clippings and

"Even if it takes you to dark places, your dreams should never be compromised."

-Simon Sotelo | DORIS #31

KING OF THE WILD FRONTIER: AN ADAM ANT POCKET READER,

\$1.50, 2 3/4" x 4 1/4", copied, 16 pgs.

I must preface this review by stating I do not listen to Adam Ant, so perhaps I'm not the target demographic for this reader. Nevertheless, the two (very) short stories with lines like "a single tear smearing his grease painted cheek as it wound its way to his chin" made for an engaging read—even if I didn't always fully understand the context in which these stories were happening. For an Adam Ant fan, this zine is a conversation starter. For everyone else, it wouldn't even be a blip on the radar.—Ashley Ravelo (MC Sunflower Jones, 1514 Studebaker Rd., Long Beach, CA 90815)

PILTDOWNLAD #9, \$5, 81/2" x 51/2", perfect bound, 57 pgs.

I really just want to pull block quotes from the first few pages of this zine instead of reviewing it in a traditional sense because when I opened this issue of Kelly Dessaint's non-fiction zine Piltdownlad, I smiled a little bit wider with every single sentence I read. This must have looked really, really creepy to anyone who happened to see me on the train platform at that time. Issue #9, aka Pamphleteria: The Rise and Fall of Phony Lid, is part one of a three-part series about Dessaint's adventures in small-press publishing and it is well worth the five bucks you pay to buy this thing. Within the first two pages-TWO PAGES!—the writer has told us that his now-defunct publishing business was basically driven by his "steadfast determination to take a crackpot idea as far as [he] possibly could"; that in his tenure as a producer and printer of the written word, he pissed off writers he published, writers he didn't publish, and pretty much all of his friends; and that he was directly responsible for driving another publisher so deep into madness that they had to be institutionalized. He admits that he definitely, totally did not have any business ever being a publisher in the first place. I remember thinking, "Well, this is going to be a hard act to follow, this intro," but it was not. Things got worse—destructive relationships, locksmiths used under false pretenses, family ghosts, roaches, and car trouble. And through it all, shit was getting done: issues were being published, submissions were being solicited. It's just really inspiring to me to read stories of goals still being accomplished in spite of a life crumbling around the person who's trying to accomplish them. This drama-riddled story from Dessaint's real life is a cliffhanger (where's part two?!) that I finished too soon. -Bianca (Piltdownlad, PO Box 22974, Oakland, CA 94609; kellydessaint.com/piltdownlad)

boxcar graffiti art for a very rounded tone. Aaron's travelogue is excellently written and engaging. Even the rather dull parts of waiting hours for the train to disembark are full of introspective thought and observation. You get the feeling he's done this before many times. He uses a bit of slang specific to train hopping, but I easily got the gist of what he meant even when I was unfamiliar with the lingo. This zine has planted the travel bug in me again. Worth the read, especially if you're in a stagnant place in life. This is the third issue out of seven available from Microcosm and it was published in March 2014. –Kayla Greet (Microcosm Publishing, 2752 N Williams Ave., Portland, OR 97227)

RESIST #47, \$5 ppd., 5" x 81/2", copied, 50pgs.

The return of *Resist*, a dense how-to zine describing various fix-it-yourself tasks and a variety of ways to start and maintain a garden from someone who is a shining example of the term "handyman." These tutorials are heavily interlaced with storytelling and read as such, which makes it a little difficult to visualize what is being explained to me. It did a great job sucking me in at the beginning with a nice holiday tale about blood, guts, and turkey feathers. The stories are personal and seemingly evolve as the author does, but if I were to attempt making anything from this zine I could imagine having a hard time finding my instructions and keeping track of their order. With that said, I am very glad to have read this zine. Nothing in it looks overwhelming and, as far as I'm concerned, everything is practical. From starting a worm bin to making an emergency bike pedal, there is something that will resonate with most of us and that's the beauty of a storyteller. Not bad after a five-year zine hiatus. —Simon Sotelo (Mat, PO Box 582345, MPLS, MN 55458)

RIOT 77 #17, 3 Euros, 81/2" x 11", glossy, 48 pgs.

Nice glossy zine from Ireland that includes interviews with Kid Congo, the Spits, Iron Cross, Canada's Ugly Pop Records, and John Joseph of the Cro-Mags, whose ceaseless shit-talking, kookiness, and arrogance is always good for a chuckle. (This is, after all, the dude who suggested that the Tohoku tsunami and Fukushima disaster were karmic retribution for Japanese whaling.) There's also oodles of thoughtful, enthusiastic record and show reviews, and while there's plenty of nods given to newer bands here, *Riot 77*'s heart belongs pretty clearly to bands and records of yesteryear. It's nicely laid out, the interviewer's knowledgeable of his subjects and clearly passionate about the bands that he covers. Long-running, it's an impressive effort, especially once you consider this is a one-person affair, which just has to be a hell of a lot of work. Nice job.—Keith Rosson (Riot 77 c/o Cian Hynes, PO Box 11342, Dublin 2, Ireland)

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\$PARE ¢HANGE #27, \$3 ppd., 5½" x 8½", copied, 30pgs.

I am not familiar with previous issues of \$pare \$hange but I know that I would like to. Issue #27 is filled with a lot of emotion and painfully sweet allusions to the title of this zine. I can only assume that the title is a coincidence, that most of the stories revolve around major "\$\phi\$hanges" like quitting your shitty job, getting rid of roommates or even the death of your dog, to the death of Diaperman. Each story takes you through a different milestone, some bigger than others and some not directly related to the guy writing about it. I hope I don't come across a story about how this series ended, at least not anytime soon. I'm not ready for that era to come to an end. —Simon Sotelo (\$pare \$hange, PO Box 6023, Chattanooga, TN 37401)

TEENAGE NEWS #2, \$?, 8 1/2" x 11", copied with glossy cover, 88 pgs.

This is a thick zine, with lots of features and interviews throughout the almost ninety pages. The author states that the zine "is based around an unceasing desire to rediscover long-lost, favorite records." I'm not entirely sure what that means, but amongst the interviews in here, a good number are with artists whose origins aren't anytime in the past couple decades: Dave Davies of The Kinks, Tommy James from the Shondells, Cherie Currie of The Runaways, and John Doe from X. Some more recent artists interviewed include Vinnie Kircher from Jaill, Gary Powell of The Libertines, and Jennifer Clavin from Bleached. There were also stories about Klaus Nomi (which I found real interesting because his is such a unique story), Oingo Boingo, and Bobby Jameson. The diversity in Teenage News is really impressive, but it's a shame that most of the interviews didn't go very in-depth. The interviewer often seemed as though he was just going through a list of questions instead of engaging the interviewee in a conversation. Perhaps for the next issue, instead of so many interviews, there could be fewer but they could go more in-depth. Still, for a second issue, this is impressive. The layout is well executed and the questions in the interviews are interesting. I certainly wouldn't mind reading a third issue. Keep it up! -Kurt Morris (teenagenews@gmail.com)

TOM TOM MAGAZINE #18, \$6, 8½" x 11", 62 pgs.

This straight-up magazine available in many fine independent bookstores bills itself as a magazine about female drummers, but really, it is so much more. The majority of features in the mag are interviews, and damn good ones. I don't even play the drums, and I found every interview to be well done and captivating. There's an interview with Fay Milton of the British band Savages, another with

Gina Schock of The Go Go's—those two right there go to show that this is not just a magazine about lady drummers, it's a magazine about some of the coolest and most exciting ones. Above all, *Tom Tom* has impeccable taste. Because it is so solidly and confidently aware of what's good, it's free to branch out of just a few types of music to talk to female percussionists who play the tarima, a big ol' box that drives the rhythms of the Son Jarrocho music played by women who are keeping the genre alive in Santa Ana, or the first female drummer in the first all-female band performing in a Cirque de Soleil show. The magazine also deals with issues specific to drummers who are women, like "When Boobs Become the Enemy," a section on how to control your rack while you are doing your drum thing. (Suggestions varied based on cup size and genre of music played. Deeply informative; probably also good for jogging.) Music, book, movie, and gear reviews are in a section in the back, too, so you don't miss out on those classic musician's-magazine elements. —Bianca (tomtommagazine.com)

ZINE NATION #2, \$3/2/6, 8 ½" x 11", copied, 42 pgs.

With the demise of Zine World in 2013 there will be a void in zines that cover zine culture. Perhaps it will be up to Zine Nation to take up that role. Although this is their second issue (after a more than ten year hiatus), the zine seems as though it has what it takes to step up to the plate and succeed. Not only are there a plethora of well-written zine reviews (including Razorcake), but also there are some interesting interviews. Interesting because they're with people doing some different things in zine culture: Ratalia Espigadora created a mobile zine library that can be pulled behind a bicycle, Frandroid is the owner of Great Worm Distro and talks about the challenges of running a distro in our digital age, and Skot Deeming is part of a "collective of curators, artists and scholars dedicated to exploring the intersections between games and contemporary art practice." These unique interviews were interspersed with the zine reviews, giving the zine some welcome diversity. There were also ads for lots of zines and zine fests. This is a great start and I'm interested in seeing where Zine Nation goes from here. This publication is based out of Toronto, Canada, so the price for a copy will differ depending where you are in the world: \$3 US, \$2 Canada, and \$6 International. Zine Nation also accepts trades. -Kurt Morris (#4-425 Crawford Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M6G 3J7, zinelisting@gmail.com)

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Anarchism and the City:

Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Barcelona, 1898-1937

By Chris Ealham, 284 pgs

The anarchist uprising in Barcelona is the holy grail for anarchists. They love talking about it and just how well they were able to manage things for those couple months until just about everyone else brought holy hell upon them.

What Chris Ealham tries to do in *Anarchism and the City* is take us through life and the events in Barcelona all the way through the anarchist revolution. In fact, only thirty pages of this book are dedicated to the anarchist uprising. Everything else is the chaos that led up to it. And chaos is a good word here, because life in Barcelona was relatively complex between 1898-1937. Apparently well researched (there are

1898-1937 was very chaotic. Add to that Ealham's non-linear approach to telling the story and the result is an even more chaotic book.

Anarchism and the City needs to be reread over and over again to be truly appreciated, but honestly, there has to be a more effective way to tell this story.

-Ollie Mikse (AK Press, 674-A 23rd St., Oakland, CA 94612, akpress.org)

Cairo

By Louis Armand, 363 pgs.

My opinion of Louis Armand's novel, *Cairo*, can be paraphrased with a shrug. Summarizing the plot is like translating hieroglyphics. The novel follows five separate characters as they navigate the terrain of this farcical cyberpunk world. From the get-go, the reader is swamped with *way* too much information (latitude and longitude coordinates, invented lingo, and symbols, such as a plus, moon, and square, which designate the character for each chapter). Yet, it's difficult to distinguish each character as they are defined externally, never as realized individuals with unique motivations. (I've been able to deduce that one character is a scientist of sorts and another a criminal working for an eccentric pornographer, but why they're all farting around is beyond me.)

Cairo longs to be a surreal mishmash of sci-fi and noir, but every glimmer of coherency dead ends into a MacGuffin. (I'm reminded of Jonathan Lethem's shaky hybrid genre novel, Gun, With Occasional Music.) This is especially frustrating given that there are twenty chapters per character, a whopping hundred chapters total. Sadly, each chapter seems to be a piece that never fits into a larger puzzle, instead meandering and detouring for the novel's lengthy duration.

Although well-written—and often painfully wordy—Cairo is an exercise in poetic incomprehensibility that quickly becomes exhausting. Think Thomas Pynchon without the irreverent sense of humor and luring rabbit hole premises. By the end, I was left scratching my head raw and

wishing I had CliffsNotes to keep me on track. –Sean Arenas (Equus, Birkbeck College, 43 Gordon Square, WC1H0PD, United Kingdom)

The Day the Country Died: A History of Anarcho Punk 1980-1984 By Ian Glasper, 471 pgs.

This book covers the first few years of the founding of the anarcho punk movement in the U.K. For *The Day The Country Died: A History of Anarcho Punk 1980-1984*, Glasper conducted hundreds of interviews with band

"Even if you have only a passing interest in anarcho punk in general, this is a great treasure."

-Kevin Dunn, The Day the Country Died: A History of Anarcho Punk 1980-1984

about a hundred and thirty references just twenty pages into the book), Ealham shows that the attempt to make Barcelona such a cultural and industrial Mecca led to a large influx of workers which the city was not prepared to handle economically or in its infrastructure. With so little to go around, the poor were left to fend for themselves and organize things at a local level and through solidarity with others in a similar position. And so, politically, Barcelona became a very leftist city, which is one of the reasons labor/union/socialist/Marxist/anarchist ideas became so prevalent. Also, the largest union in Barcelona (the CNT)—and to some extent the leading anarchist organization (the FAI) and their role in the political and economic life of Barcelonans—is also frequently addressed in this book.

However, my problem with this book—aside from the horrible design of tiny font and crowded pages—is that it covers a lot in a very haphazard way. Ealham has made a very academic study in this book (which also makes Anarchism and the City read more like a long thesis than a book for the lay reader) and introduces a lot of verbiage and insists on using the original Catalan spelling which is distracting; and, instead of sticking with events in a certain time period, he constantly runs back and forth between different points in history and different organizations' perspective, which creates a very confusing read. I kept forgetting whose perspective in what time period we were dealing with. In addition to that, Ealham focuses entirely on events on Barcelona and does not address what outside forces influenced decision making or affected events. As such, the reader gets no perspective on what is driving events outside of Barcelona. Barcelona from

members associated with those heady days, when British anarcho punks believed that they were engaged in a vital struggle against the country's swerve to the political right, led by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher at the top and a growing gang of quasi-fascists in the streets. Those early years seem so distant, especially when today's American anarcho punks often seem primarily concerned with the best ways to score pizza out of a dumpster. I don't mean that as a cheap shot. I'm not an anarchist, but I am sympathetic to their beliefs, even if I often have little patience with the hippie-wannabes who pass themselves off as crust punks. But this book does a good job of exploring how, in the early days of U.K. anarcho punk, elements from two subculture strands—hippie anarchists and political DIY punks—came together to form something of a movement.

The Day The Country Died is over 450 pages, but don't be scared away by that. It is full of black-and-white photos, and broken up into bite-sized chunks that focus on individual bands. In fact, the organization of the book is really smart, but not without problems. What Glasper does is divide up the book into sections that focus on specific geographical scenes (such as North and Northeast London, South and Southeast London, South and Southwest England, Wales, and so on) covering all of the U.K. He then subdivides each of those geographical sections to focus on individual bands. For example, chapter nine on Scotland is divided into four parts, focusing on Oi Polloi, Political Asylum, Alternative, and AOA respectively. And each band's section contains a "Selected Discography," which is a valuable resource. This structure works well because it gives each band a singular focus. Each section is richly detailed with lengthy quotes from

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MUGE SELEGION A OF GHEAP VINY AND AND LOST CATRECORDS. DRG interviews that provide the historical evolution of that particular band, but also reflect on what the principal actors thought and felt about a range of issues. You also get a sense of how distinct the various geographic scenes were: what local issues they were facing as well as the personal dynamics and challenges within each scene.

What is somewhat lost is the ways the scenes interacted with each other. The interviews clearly show a great deal of communication and connectivity between bands and scenes, but Glasper rarely steps back often enough or far enough to provide a bigger picture. That was frustrating at times. Also frustrating was the fact that a book organized around bands inevitably overlooks the non-band elements of any scene. What about the zines, labels, artists making posters and folks booking shows? Again, it is clear from the interviews that the non-musical support structure for the anarcho punk scenes was extremely important, but as a reader we are left to fill in a lot of blanks.

These drawbacks are unfortunate, but don't diminish what Glasper has pulled off here. This book is a monumental accomplishment. He covers around eighty bands—some of which you will already be familiar with, like Crass, Conflict, and Subhumans, but many you probably aren't—such as Icon D, The Xpozez and Untermensch, to name a few. And while the more influential bands get slightly more space, even the lesser known bands are given a great deal of attention and respect. The interviews that

Bar Belle where she danced and lip-synched and suddenly awakes to find herself shackled in a cave in the realm of Houmack, where she is told she is expected to wed the Lord of the Sky and bear his children. Equipped with the wrong reproductive organs for the job and a generally bad attitude, Sleazella is determined to somehow jilt the Houmack King and make her way back to Green Bay and her life at the Bar Belle. Swashbuckling bizarro adventure then ensues.

Roaming in and out of Sleazella's storyline is a wild menagerie of exotic and teratological creatures, both supernal and earthbound. Many—such as the slavwolves with their multiple nipple-mouths and the Nthvorians who fire roast and then devour their own penises—have a Dr. Seussian flavor, harkening back to the unlikely beasts that populate *On Beyond Zebra*.

Even what we usually consider to be "laws of nature," like gravity for instance, are suspended or even reversed in D & D. Not only does it, in classic Fortean fashion, rain blood, but the blood "rains" upward towards the sky—leaving the landscape below littered with husks of the bloodless unfortunates caught in the "storm."

It could be argued that the winding swords-and-sorcery storyline takes a deliberate backseat to a garish parade of All Things Odd, both creatures and events. In fact, with its over-the-top delivery, it's very possible that this little book is a piss-take on the *Dungeons and Dragons* game and related wizardly entertainments. And though I suspect that's the case, I can't speak

"((sorry art dudes))... Nice work you doughnut-eating bastards!"

-Rev. Nørb, Graphic Underground: London 1977-1990

underpin the book are widespread and insightful. Sure, they tend towards glorification of the scene, but they are not without a strong dose of critical reflection. Of course, I would like to have seen more attention to how anarcho punks worked out the little details of life (e.g., how did a band collective insure equity of workload?), but there is so much in here that is hard to be disappointed.

There is a DVD out with the same title that covers similar ground (I can't recall Glasper's relationship to that documentary, but I'm pretty sure he is interviewed in it). The film is good—especially because you get to hear the music—but the book is much, much better. It covers far more ground and goes far deeper. Even if you have only a passing interest in these bands or in anarcho punk in general, this is a great treasure.—Kevin Dunn (Cherry Red Books, 3a Long Island House, Warple Way, London W3 ORG)

Dungeons & Drag Queens By MP Johnson, 133 pgs.

With the very idea of "reality" currently being hijacked by a pestiferous strain of low-brow entertainment called "Reality TV"—replete with Bibletoting, duck murdering hillbillies and wealthy, dim-bulb, selfie-snapping Armenian narcissists—it's little wonder that we media-scat-spackled humans might run to works of fantasy for sanctuary, now more than ever. And who can blame us? This soul-sucking type of hollowed out "reality," whether in the form of Manufactured-Reality TV shows or the plucked and propped-up "reality" presented in Facebook pages, seems to have attached itself to the faces of every man, woman, and child in the western hemisphere like itchy bee beards. If this shit is reality, then maybe even unusual forms of escapism like those enjoyed by paraphilic diaper-wearing enthusiasts of the adult baby syndrome stripe aren't all that unreasonable after all.

Any fantasy port in a so-called "reality" shit storm, I guess.

MP Johnson's latest surrealist-baroque fantasy, entitled *Dungeons & Drag Queens*, is a warty, little psychedelic dwarf of a book, and one tripping on horse tranquilizers at that. Apparently this novella is classified among the eldritch tomes that make up the "Bizarro" genre, with its emphasis on oddness at every turn and its ever-shifting sands of absurdist phantasmagoria. Within its pages is a mushroom- and tumor-dotted mythology, crudely similar to something one might come across in Joseph Campbell's *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, just with more oozing orifices.

The hero/heroine of this medieval tale is Sleazella LuRuse, a drag queen originally from Green Bay who comes across as a combination of Lady Gaga, Wendy O. Williams, J. Edgar Hoover, and any number of rough'n'tumble roller derby dames. She is mysteriously snatched from the stage at the

from any position of authority since my adolescent nerdiness never included *Dungeon and Dragons* parties and my adult nerdiness, as of yet, does not even include a single viewing the very popular *Game of Thrones*. So there could well be, scattered throughout this book, examples of bitingly clever parody that are simply failing to register with me.

What I am sure of is that *Dungeons & Drag Queens* is dribbling, burping, and smeared with more types of glop and slime than a Nickelodeon Kid's Choice Award show. Gunk, spew, oozing pustules, pink jelly, white pap, spider shit, and even lard from the gorpalfish—these are all but a mere grocery store food-demonstrator lady sampling of the viscous bodily fluids and excreta offered up on nearly every page of *D & D*.

I think it could be said that *Dungeons & Drag Queens* is a modern day, dildo-and-nipple-clip *Alice in Wonderland*—but one with a stunted, snorting homunculus eroticism and a case of crotch rot. It's a geeky cross between Comic Con and RuPaul, and it is oozing with more bodily excretions than you could mop up from Charles Bukowski's bathroom floor. Perhaps not meant for the squeamish or brain-numbed Reality TV junkies, it is a psychedelically charged headcheese sandwich that fans of Bizzaro Lit will most likely relish.

I only wish that the cross-dressing director and schlock fantasy auteur, Ed Wood, was still alive; no one else I can think of would be so eminently and queerly qualified to translate this epic tale of transvestitism to the big screen. –Aphid Peewit (Eraserhead Press, eraserheadpress.com)

Graphic Underground: London 1977-1990

By Brian Lambert, 240 pgs.

It is probably tiresome for the locals to hear this, yet probably bears immediate mention, that this is London Ontario of which we speak, not the place with the bridge and the dungeon ((although one supposes those freaky Canadians have a little of both of those as well))—a town of around 350,000, lost somewhere between Detroit and Toronto, and renowned for its drab normalcy. This book was intended to serve as a companion piece to an art exhibit of London punk ephemera—flyers, zines, record covers—and, as such, I find it tooled slightly towards the inclinations of the person who picks it up in the gift shop on the way out of the exhibition rather than completely aimed to pique the interests of the random bookstore snooper ((case in point: Nowhere on the front cover is it clarified that the London in question is in Canada—when I initially flipped through it, my first thought was "Hey, where's all the Jamie Reid shit?")). Further, as the book was produced through a collegiate art gallery, there's an understandable tendency here to place the punk happenings du jour ((see? I can speak Canadian!)) in the context of the

art scenes of the day ((stemming from/in opposition to/etc.)), which is a sort of academic turn one doesn't usually see in scene-documenting materials, where potential connections between the punk scenes and art scenes usually merit about half a sentence of discussion. Essays aside, the brunt of this book is basically pictures of fourteen years' worth of flyers and some other stuff—which is awesome not so much because London's flyers were anything special to look at, graphically ((they weren't)) ((sorry art dudes)), but because it brings to bear the idea that EVERY scene could produce a book like this. Which is, dare I say, "what it's all about." Nice work you doughnut-eating bastards! —Rev. Nørb (McIntosh Gallery, 1151 Richmond St., London ON, N6A 3K7, Canada, mcintoshgallery.ca)



GG Allin Uncensored: DVD

As far as I'm concerned, there are two GG Allins. One was a musician, a curator of low fidelity garage punk. His music, more or less, has become stale twenty years down the line. Having no connection to the time that Allin was actually around, with stories spreading about him like a ghost around a campfire, the music doesn't sound all that violent or revolutionary. More than anything, it sounds like washed-out noise, hardcore that's nothing more than hardcore.

The other GG Allin was the spectacle, the pooping, vomiting, violent, and bloody mess of a man who defied you to enjoy what you saw. Though I have no problem with people enjoying the first GG Allin, this Allin is unpleasant to view and comprehend. Worse yet, he makes no statement other than shock, or at least none that I can discern. Granted, his brand of shock rock makes all others seem tame and kitten-like.

This DVD is less of a tribute to the first GG Allin and more of a document of the performance of the second. The music quality in the recording is so blown out, that GG Allin is the least audible thing in the mix, but the camera loves him. The audience can't get enough of the spectacle. American flags torn asunder, microphones being shoved into assholes, Allin beating his forehead with the fervor of a madman, all there in their '90s VHS tape glory. Truly, I couldn't imagine even thinking about attending a GG Allin show back when he toured actively. It sounds and looks like a nightmare.

I don't agree with Allin's quintessential premise that rock music needs to be violent and in-your-face vulgar. That's the road of a zero sum game, where diminishing returns would mean that eventually rock music would be forced into the obscure as it tried to find more ways to shock people. Shock is a limited art that's best used when forcing society to confront awkward truths about itself, but with the end goal of just disgusting the audience, there is no winner. Except for Allin himself, who I assume is still laughing his ass off, if the afterlife he believed in exists. Grade: C. —Bryan Static (MVD Visual, 203 Windsor Rd, Pottstown, PA 19464, mvdb2b.com)

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